

INDIAN FAIRY TALES

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BY

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OF COOCH BEHAR



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DEDICATED

WITH KIND PERMISSION TO

HER ROYAL HIGHNESS

PRINCESS VICTORIA
OF WALES

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THE NEEDLE PRINCE

There was a Maharajah who had seven daughters. He loved them all equally well. Though they were all very pretty, the youngest was the best-looking of the seven, and she was the favourite of her mother. One day while they were all playing in the palace-gardens, they asked one another whom each loved most and preferred to live with. All the six elder ones said they would never like to leave their parents' home, where they were so happy, and they all preferred to stay with their own sisters. The youngest sister kept silent and never said a word to all this. Some of the elder sisters came to her and asked: "How is it that you do not join us in the talk?"

She answered softly: "I dare not; you might scold me, if you heard my view of the matter."

Then the six sisters cried out together: "What is it? What is your idea about it?"

"Won't you get annoyed if I spoke plainly?"


"Why should we be?"

"You might be," sweetly said the little girl.

"Don't be foolish," said the others. "Let us know what your idea is."

The youngest sister said: "We often hear





mother say there is nobody like the husband to a woman, and that she can love no one more than her husband. I often wonder if I shall ever get married."

"And why not?" said the sisters, "Of course, we all shall, some day."

"Then," said the youngest sister, "I would love my husband most, and would always like to be with him."


"Oh, don't, don't!" they all cried aloud. "Both father and mother, hearing you speak like that, would turn you out of the house "

"Try and forget what you said," the sisters continued, "You cannot possibly love your husband more than you love us."

"Yes, I will," said the girl. "I will love my husband more than any one in this world."

"Very well, then, we will go and tell mother what you have said."

The little sister said: "Don't you know, dear sisters, how mother speaks of her childhood, how happy she was with her brothers and sisters? And now mother says that nothing would make her leave father and go back to the happy home she had in her childhood. My ideal of happiness is my mother's. I don't think any woman could be happier than mother is, and my ambition is to be like my mother."



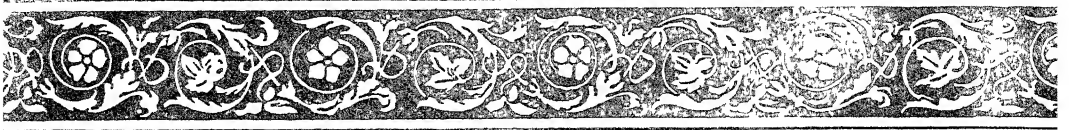




The sisters coaxed her and threatened her, asking her to change her mind, but she would not. Then the girls ran into the house telling her they would go and report everything to their mother. The poor girl got frightened by their threat and ran out of the garden as it was getting dark, and escaped from the kingdom. She wandered in the jungle for days and roamed about until she felt she could not walk any more. She was exhausted with hunger and thirst. It was a hot day and the sun was just overhead. She sat down under a tree, thinking: "Had I been married, I might have been quite happy to-day."

While she was thus thinking, her eyes wandered and she thought she saw in the distance the outlines of a house. This new hope gave her strength and she ran in that direction. When she reached the spot, she found it was a big palace, with a beautiful garden in front; and the fountains and bandstand proved that it was a pleasure garden. She entered by the big gateway. What a grand building it was! White marble pillars and archways, marble verandahs and marble staircases! From courtyard to courtyard she walked about, but she saw nobody and could hear no voice, which alarmed her; and she wailed out pitifully: "Is there nobody to give me some food and water? I am dying of hunger and thirst."





She received no answer except the echo of her own voice. In fright she ran into one of the grand rooms and found it was a dressing-room with a delightful bath-room attached to it. The swimming-bath was filled with rose-water. As she felt hot and tired she could not keep herself from jumping into the bath, which cooled and refreshed her. When she came out she found in the dressing-room valuable *saris* and jewels, arranged near the mirror. She dressed herself in one of the *saris* and put on all the jewels and looked at herself admiringly in the mirror. Then she felt a longing for food. She walked round the courtyard and saw a room stored with nice fruit and delicious sweets. She entered and to her great delight she saw a small carpet spread on the floor, and golden plates and dishes laid with curry and rice. She sat down and enjoyed a good breakfast after many a day. She then felt happy and refreshed. She thought she would go and have a look at the rooms upstairs. She went up, and found the rooms furnished in a most luxurious style and for a long time she wondered to whom the palace could belong. 'Why should a big palace like this be deserted? No one is found here and yet it is certain that somebody comes and goes, as I found the bath ready and the food cooked. Was there nobody living in this big house?' Then she walked from one room to another, and at last she came to a



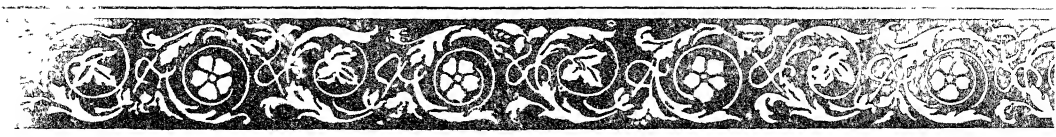


big room most gorgeously furnished. Inside these was a golden bed and, lo! on it lay a body. The young princess stood near the door, motionless. Could it be a dead body? Had some one come and killed the person and left the body here? Should she run away? Perhaps a giant might come to whom the house belonged. Such thoughts troubled her for some time. At last she boldly went near the bed, and found a most handsome young man's body lying on it, covered over with thousands of needles. Her loving little heart ached to see that sight and she wept bitterly over it.

"Who could have been so cruel?" she thought. "I will stay here and take the needles out. Dead though he be, his body must not be hurt." And she sat there and began to take the needles out of the body, one by one.

Fourteen days had passed, thousands of needles had been taken out of the body, only those in the two eyes were left; and the princess felt happy to think that she would finish taking out the needles that day, when she suddenly saw a woman's figure appearing at the door. The princess walked to the door and found it was one of her maid-servants. This servant had got frightened after the princess had escaped, lest the Maharajah should punish her for neglect of duty. So she also had left the kingdom the very day of the





princess's flight, in search of her. She was old and ugly, dark and fat. The princess thanked her for having followed her there, and told her the whole story of the deserted palace. She took the servant by the hand and walked up to the bed and said : "Look at the number of needles I have taken out of his body. Is it not sad to think that this handsome young man will not get out of bed again? Is it not cruel to think that he is dead and gone?"

The old servant said : "Yes, it is."

Then the princess spoke again, and said : "It is getting so late, and I am rather tired to-day. Will you sit here? I shall go and have my bath and breakfast and then come back and take out those few needles from his eyes. But don't you touch the body."

The maid promised as she was bid, and the princess went, leaving her there. The maid thought : "Here is an opportunity for me to take the needles out;" and as she removed the few remaining needles, the dead man opened his eyes and hers was the first face that he saw. He leaped out of his bed and the maid was much attracted by his handsome looks. The youth said : "Did *you* take all the needles out of my body? Have you been here a fortnight?"

The maid replied in a faltering voice : "Yes, I took out all the needles, and I have been here fifteen days."



“In that case,” said the young man, “you shall be my wife, for I shall have to marry you.”

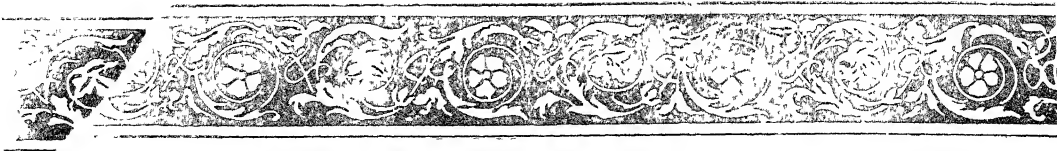
While they were talking thus, the young princess came back. Dressed in one of her best *saris*, her beautiful black hair hanging down, her valuable jewels heightening her beauty, she stepped like a goddess into the room. She saw the young man standing on the floor and their eyes met for the first time. Startled at the vision, the young man asked the maid: “Who is this fair maiden?”

“She is only my maid,” the old hag curtly replied.

The poor young princess’s heart sank at these words, and she thought: “I, a princess, that servant’s maid? I, who have been here for fifteen days, and who took all the needles out of the body?—and now my maid claims him to be hers! If I had but stayed a little longer, I would have taken those few needles out of his eyes and he would have been mine—and mine for ever!”

While the princess thought thus, the young man was also thinking: “Why did I not see this beautiful face when I opened my eyes? If *she* had taken the needles out of my body how happy might I have been to-day!” And somehow he had a suspicion that such a lovely girl could not possibly be a maid-servant. After a few moments’ silence, he said: “I am a prince. This





house and this kingdom belong to me. I was under a spell that until a princess came and took the needles out of my body, I should never get back my kingdom or my rank. But as yet I do not hear the music, neither do I see any courtiers. I am obliged to postpone my marriage," he said, looking at the maid, "till I hear the sound of music."

From that day the maid became horribly cruel to the young princess. She took all her best *saris* from her, and all the beautiful jewels, in which she dressed herself, and she gave the princess coarse *saris* to wear and little to eat. She used to thrash her and would often threaten to kill her. The poor girl wept in silence and did not know where to turn for consolation. One evening she lay down in the garden and fell in a trance. Her tears rolled down her cheeks and bathed the lovely flowers; and little fairies came and danced on the blossoms near her face. One of the fairies said: "Oh, princess, dry those tears, you *will* be married to him!"

"How can I?" asked the princess. "How could he know that it was I who took the needles out?"

A second fairy said: "Oh yes, he will, he shall know it before long," and thus the fairies comforted and consoled the princess.

Many a month passed. The prince heard no wedding music. He had not married the old ugly maid-





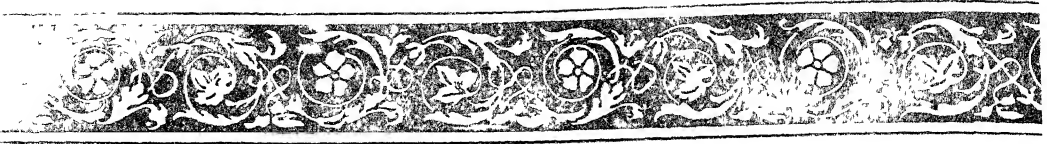
servant and the young princess continued her interviews with the fairies

One night the maid-servant threatened to kill the prince if he did not marry her forthwith. "Why should you not marry me?" she screamed out, "I have saved your life and you are so ungrateful that you have suspicious about it and wish to wait. What would you wait for?" They had many angry words about it and she lost her temper and repeated her threat. The prince quietly escaped from the palace and went out into the garden. It was a bright, moonlight night, and he saw the lovely princess lying near a fountain. Her long, waving black hair covered her body, and numbers of little fairies were tripping along on the hair; some were plucking flowers and some were arranging them on her head to make a crown. Her tears dropped on the flowers and the grass, forming dew-drops there. Some of the fairies were drying her tears and speaking to her, saying: "Fair princess, weep no more."

"Oh, kind fairies," cried out the princess, "tell me, tell me, how long should I wait? How could he get to know that it was I who took out all the needles from his body?"

"Oh, lovely princess," said one of the fairies, "why didst thou leave him? How did the maid come?"

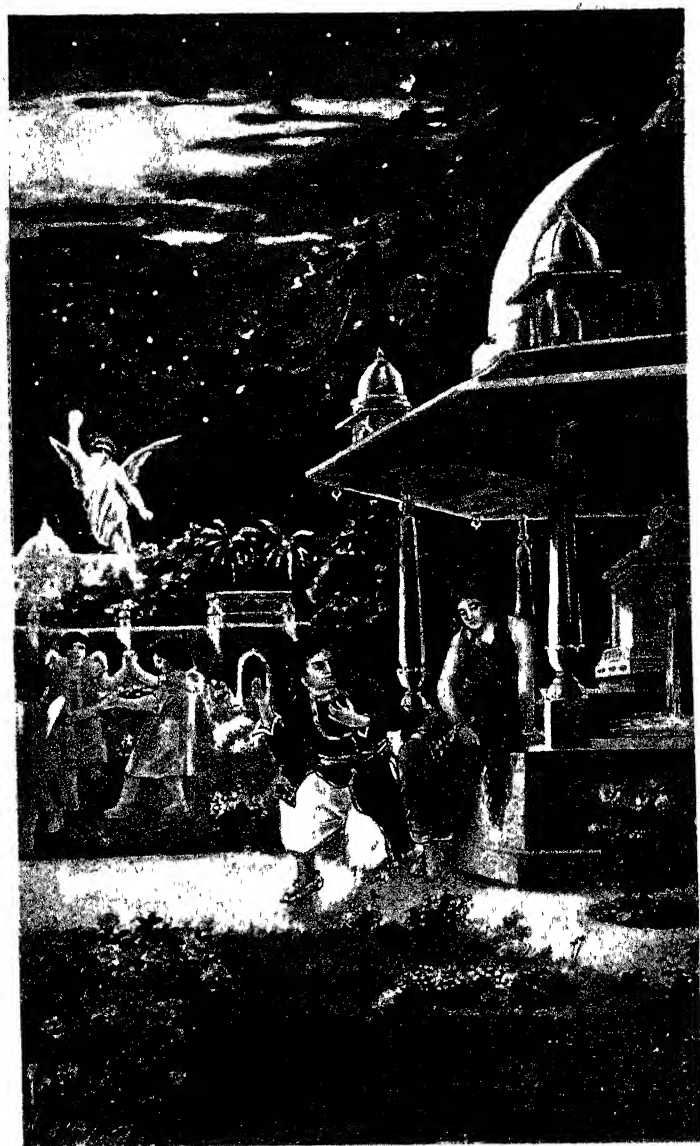




“Listen to me, dear fairies. For fourteen days and nights I sat by his bed and removed thousands and thousands of needles from his body. Only a few needles were left, in his eyes, when my maid-servant appeared, and I asked her to sit by him just while I had my bath and breakfast, as I was tired and hungry. When I returned, after a while, I found the prince out of bed and standing in the room, and to my great distress I heard the maid tell him that she was the one who had saved his life. What could I do but keep quiet, as true enough she had taken out the last few needles and those were from his eyes, and the first person he had seen on opening his eyes was this maid-servant of mine?”

“Dear princess, do not cry,” said the fairies. “The prince will soon come to know the truth, and will be wedded to you.”

The prince heard all this, and his heart leaped with joy. He walked slowly up to the princess and at his approach all the fairies fled. The crown of flowers was still on her head, and the creepers were still lying on her wavy hair and she looked like the queen of flowers in the garden. He knelt down by her, and taking her little hand in his, he kissed it, and said : “My beautiful bride, let us be wedded to-night, here, in this garden of flowers and fairies.”





No sooner had he uttered these words than the sound of music was heard, horses neighed, elephants trumpeted with joy, conch-shells were blown, courtiers came galloping up to the palace, the whole place was illuminated in a moment, and once more the fair princess looked up into the loving eyes of the prince.

She answered him sweetly, "Prince, my master, how can you wed a servant? I am but a serving-maid, and you are a prince."

"Thou art my bride, my beautiful bride, and I shall wed thee here in thy flower-garment, which the fairies have prepared for thee," said he.

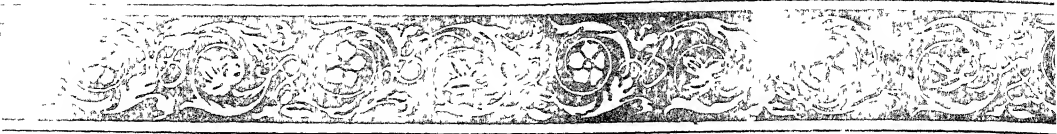
Then the Brahmins came and married them in the garden, where the prince had found his princess, who had saved his life.

After the ceremony was over, who should come but the old maid-servant, looking uglier than ever? Seeing the prince seated with the princess, she screamed out to him: "I saved your life and you have married my maid-servant."

The prince, sword in hand, said: "Unless you confess the truth before all my courtiers, friends and relations, you shall be beheaded at once. I heard the truth from the fairies."

The old maid-servant then came out with the whole story, how the princess, a rich and powerful Maharaja's





daughter, left her parents' home, how the maid had followed her, and on the fifteenth day discovered her in the room where the 'Needle Prince' was lying. She said that she had promised the princess not to touch the prince's body, but, she confessed, she had broken her promise and removed the needles.

The prince asked her : "Why did the princess leave her parents?"

"Because," said the maid, "the princess told her sisters that if she ever married, she would love her husband more than any one else and would like to be with him always."

The prince lifted the fair hand of the princess to his lips and, looking at her lovingly, said : "My beautiful bride, my little princess, there is no other couple in this world that could love each other more and we shall never, never part."

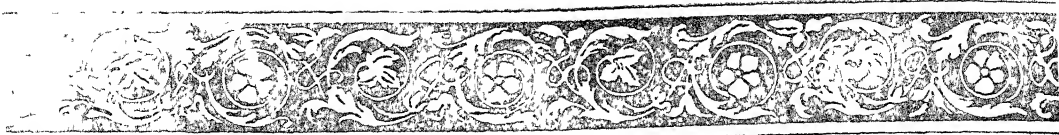


THE SNAKE PRINCE

There was a Maharajah who had two Maharanis. The elder was fair, gentle and kind-hearted. The second was tall, big and had striking looks. The Maharajah was fonder of the younger wife, and by and by got into her power, so much so that he did everything to please her. Though he was fond of his first wife he dared not do anything for her, or give her any presents, as the young Maharani disliked her most.

There was a little girl born to the first Maharani, and the Maharajah loved this daughter. At this, the wicked Maharani became very jealous and told the Maharajah she would not live under the same roof with the elder Maharani. So the Maharajah was obliged to build a little hut on the grounds of the palace, where the good Maharani, with her daughter, was removed. The little girl was brought up in poverty. She never knew what the comforts of palace-life meant, she never had rich *saris*, nor jewels, on her lovely little form. But she was a good little girl, and grew up to be a beautiful woman. She helped her mother at her cooking and other household duties. She used to go to the jungle to gather pieces of wood for the fire. When she was a young lady of seventeen or eighteen,





she had gone to the jungle one morning, and was gathering fire-wood, when she heard a loving, kind voice call out to her "Fair maiden, will you marry me?"

She thought at first that it might be one of the wood-cutters and looked round, but could see no one. Again the voice addressed her, "Will you marry me, fair maiden?"

She ran in and out among the big trees, thinking that somebody was hiding behind them, but saw no one. Then she got rather frightened, gathered the wood together and hastily carried the bundle home. Since that day, whenever she went to the jungle for fuel, she heard the same voice asking her the same question. Then she thought she must ask her mother what it all meant. So one evening, lying beside her mother, she related the whole story.

"Well, my child," said the mother, "did the voice sound like a giant's voice,—a harsh, cruel voice? Did it frighten you?"

"No, dear mother, it was a gentle, kind voice, a voice that told me not to be afraid of being in the jungle alone."

"And did you see nobody and nothing?" exclaimed the mother.

"No, mother, I saw nobody and nothing. I ran in and out of the jungle and yet could see none."



“Perhaps it was an evil spirit,” said the mother.
“You had better try and forget it.”

But the next morning when the girl heard the same voice asking her the same question again, she felt that it wanted an answer. So that evening she asked her mother, “May I give the voice an answer, mother?”

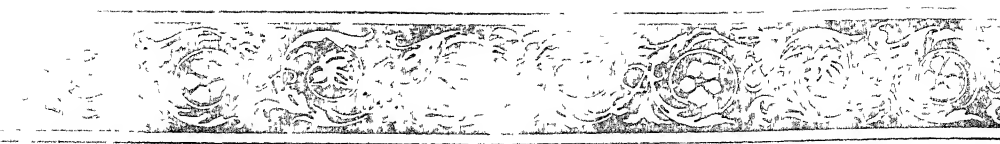
The mother thought for a while, and then said :
“A happy idea has struck me. Yes, you may give an answer. Say to the voice, ‘Whoever thou art, I am speaking to the Voice. I shall be thy bride; but when will it be?’”

The following morning when the girl went to the jungle and heard the kind, gentle voice ask her the same question, “Fair maiden, will you marry me?” she spoke sweetly in reply and said : “Yes, I will be your bride; but when shall it be?”

No sooner were these words uttered than the whole jungle was filled with music, and she heard fireworks hissing and cracking in the distance. She looked round, but could see no musicians and no fireworks, and she heard the gentle voice answer her, “Thank you, fair maiden, you have made me happy, and I live again. Our marriage will take place at midnight on the fifth day from now.”

The girl came home and told her mother all that had happened in the jungle that day. The mother

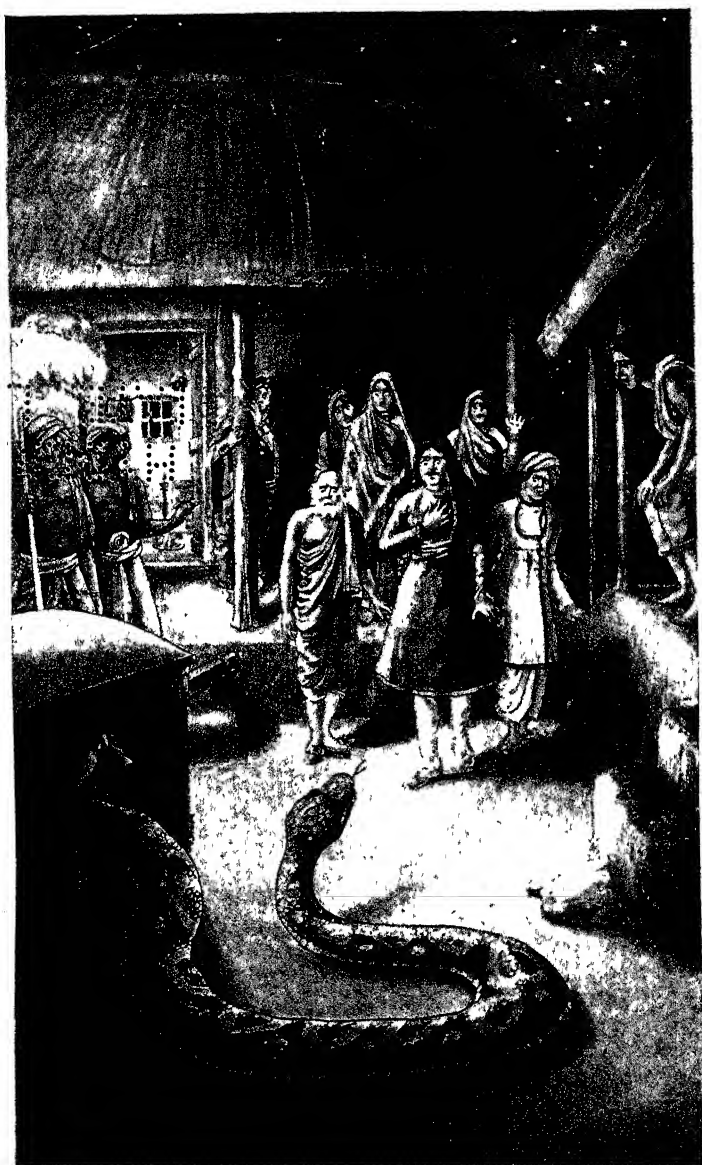




went to the *pandit* (wise man) and asked him if there was any auspicious time on the day the Voice had mentioned, and the *pandit* told her that the time and date mentioned was most auspicious for weddings. The mother looked happy at this, and sent a message to the Maharajah. The father was pleasantly surprised at the welcome news, and sent many valuable gifts to his daughter, and said he would be present on the occasion. The Maharani had a little ground in front of her hut, which she arranged for the reception and a little verandah of the hut was freshly painted (*alpana*) for the *varan*.

On the evening fixed, lights brightened the little hut and the reception ground. A few friends were invited to meet the bridegroom. They waited and waited, but there was no sign of him. The Maharajah looked much displeased, and said in an angry voice, "I now understand why my young Maharani did not like this elder wife of mine. She is stupid, she is scenseless, she is mad. Fancy believing a voice in the jungle! Would any sensible woman depend on dreams? But my elder wife has done it, and now people will not say that I was unkind and unjust in sending her out of my palace."

The poor mother and daughter trembled at finding the Maharajah in such temper. Midnight drew near,





and the few lights they had were almost burnt out, when they saw a *palki* coming towards the hut. They said, "That must be the bridegroom," and they were right. It stopped near the place for reception, and to their horror they saw a huge python crawl out of the *palki*. The poor girl, seeing this from the hut, cried out to her mother, "It was a snake and only a snake bridegroom."

When they looked again, they saw that the *palki* and *palki*-bearers had gone. The snake bridegroom came and sat on the high seat and the mother did the *varan* and the little bride stood by the enormous snake. They were married and into their hut the snake went and lay on the bed, and the little bride was locked inside the hut with the snake. The poor mother herself lay awake in the verandah. She heard the girl cry out, "Mother, mother, my arms are aching," and the mother thought it was her arms that were being swallowed.

"Oh mother, mother, my legs are aching," and the mother thought her legs were being eaten.

The girl kept crying out like that the whole night. Early in the morning the mother thought the girl had been killed and swallowed by the python. Then she cried, saying, "Oh why did I marry you to a snake, my child? I have no one left now. Why did I marry you to a snake?"





But she was amazed to hear all on a sudden the sound of anklets and footsteps inside the room. Then some gentle hand opened the door and there stood her beautiful daughter. The mother was overjoyed to see her child alive and covered with jewels. She eagerly asked, "What happened to you that you cried the whole night, saying your legs were aching and your arms were aching?"

"Don't you see, mother, all these jewels are so heavy that when my husband was decking me with them I cried like that."

"But where is the snake?" asked the mother, looking into the hut.

"He is not a snake, mother, he is not a snake!" cried the daughter. "He is a most handsome young man."

"But where has he gone?" asked the mother.

"Perhaps to the forest," said the girl. "But he will come back in the evening."

Every night the snake bridegroom came in late, and every night he gave his wife most beautiful jewels. Thus they lived very happily, the mother with her happy daughter.

When the wicked Maharani came to hear of this she was furious, and commanded her high officials to get a big python from the forest to marry her own





daughter to, as she also had one. The men did as they were ordered and with great pomp the wicked Maharani's daughter was married to a python, and when that poor girl was locked in with her snake-husband she screamed out to her mother, "Let me out, let me out, my arm is aching." And the mother in a stern voice said, "My child, my child, have no fear; put your ornaments on, put your ornaments on."

But when the morning came, there was no sound heard inside the room. They broke open the door and found that the snake had killed the girl. Thus did the wicked Maharani pay for her wicked jealousy.

Now to the hut of the good Maharani came friends and relations all who had deserted her before. But the Maharani lived on in the old style, as if she were a beggar's wife. The people all loved her and admired her the more for it.

One evening she said to her daughter, "My girl, it does not sound well that you are the wife of a snake. If as you say, the skin of the snake is but a disguise, you must try and destroy it, and then your husband will no longer be a snake."

So that night the mother made a big fire in the hut and told her girl that when the husband would fall asleep putting off his snake-skin, she should throw it into the fire. The daughter waited for the oppor-





tunity. She lay awake that night and when she knew that her husband was sound asleep she threw the skin into the fire. The husband woke up, and, seeing the snake-skin being burnt, cried out to his wife, "What have you done? What have you done?"

"Why," said the sweet, gentle voice of his wife, "why should you be a snake and hide your handsome face and body in that terrible python-skin. I love you, my husband, and I want people to see you and to know you."

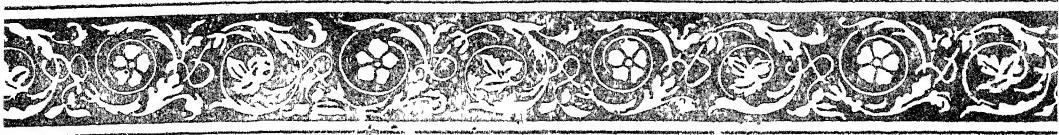
And next morning the handsome young bridegroom came out of the hut. He was dressed as a Prince, and he told them that the curse by which he was disguised as a snake was to hold him until he married the Princess, and that from now he would no longer have to crawl about in the forest like a python.

The Maharajah got very angry with the wicked Maharani when he heard she had married her daughter to a python out of jealousy towards the good Maharani, and he ordered his men to turn her out of his State. He then asked the good Maharani to come and live in the palace as she had done before.

The 'Snake Prince' took his beautiful wife to his own kingdom, which was rich and great, and all his people welcomed him and his queen.







THE MONKEY

A Maharajah had two Maharanis. When he married the second time, he thought he would be the happy husband of two loving wives, but he found that the young wife was very jealous of the first Maharani and was always threatening to leave him, or to kill herself, if the elder Maharani continued to live in the same house.

After a time, the Maharajah was compelled to send the elder and good Maharani away from the palace. This good Maharani lived in a little house just outside her husband's kingdom so that the young Maharani soon forgot all about her. In course of time she thought her rival was long dead; but the Maharajah loved his first wife just the same, although she was turned out of his palace, and he often visited her.

One day the Maharajah made up his mind to undertake a long sea voyage, and he ordered hundreds of ships to be got ready to take him on his travels. Just before he left, he asked the young Maharani what she would like him to bring from the distant shores to which he was going; and she answered, in her proud way: "Emeralds and rubies and all the valuable jewels that you find."





Then he bade her farewell. Quietly he went to the elder Maharani's house at night and said : "I am going on a long voyage. Won't you have me bring you something from the new countries I am going to visit?"

She touched his feet, and said : "Maharajah, I want nothing, but I wish you luck and a safe journey back."

"My wife," said the Maharajah, "I should like to bring something for you, so ask for it."

The Maharani thought for a little while and then said : "If you are so kind, I should like to have a little monkey."

"Only a monkey?" laughed the Maharajah, and he thought, "I wonder why she is so stupid."

The Maharajah left the following day, and he travelled for a long time. He bought grand jewels for his young Maharani and on the last day, when he was on his way back, he thought of the monkey, and he said to himself : "I must take a monkey for my elder Maharani." Suddenly he saw a monkey on the branch of a tree and he ordered his men to catch it. On hearing this, the monkey came down from the tree and walked up to the Maharajah. They returned home and the Maharajah went straight to the young Maharani and gave her all the beautiful jewels. She was





delighted with them, and, when everything was quiet within at night, the Maharajah walked, with the monkey, to the elder Maharani's house.

The Maharani looked most happy to see her husband back. The Maharajah gave her monkey and she did not know how to thank him. With clasped hands, she said: "Maharajah, I have no children, no companions, no friends in this world. I hope the monkey will prove to be all this to me."

This remark got known, and also the fact that the elder Maharani was still alive, and that the Maharajah had brought a monkey as a present for her. The young Maharani, when she heard about it, was much pleased. She thought people would dislike the elder Maharani the more, now that she had shown herself to have no brains, by asking for the present of a monkey.

The elder Maharani treated the monkey just like a son. She bathed and dressed and fed him as if he were a human being and often sent messages by him to the Maharajah, who began to like the monkey. It was wonderful, for the monkey could speak and could ride and was extraordinarily clever. Since the monkey had come to the Maharani's house, the place wore a different look. He used to bring things from the Maharajah for her comfort and would never let her think that she was forsaken or sent away.





After a time, the young Maharani had a son and there were great rejoicings in the State. This hurt the monkey much.

“Why should my mother be left out of such happiness?” said the monkey, who addressed the elder Maharani as “mother.” After a few days he went to the Maharajah and said : “My mother has a beautiful baby boy.”

“Really?” said the Maharajah, “I must come and see him.”

“Oh, no, no,” cried the monkey, “not just yet. I shall tell Your Majesty when you can see my little brother.”

On the eighth day after the child’s birth, the young Maharani celebrated the great festival called *Atkaora*, and everybody was given grand presents. The monkey went to the Maharajah after eight days and said : “Your Majesty, will there not be any *Atkaora* for my little brother?”

The Maharajah said : “Certainly,” and ordered some money to be given to the monkey, who sent for musicians and gave away small presents, and thus the birth of ‘the prince’ was celebrated. One after another, many ceremonies took place at the young Maharani’s palace and the monkey had similar ceremonies performed at his little house also, and the Maharajah each





time helped him with money. Every time the monkey went to the Maharajah for money, the elder Maharani said to him : "We shall both be killed when the Maharajah comes to know that this is all false and that there is no prince here," and she begged the monkey not to do it, but her words had no effect on the queer animal.

Years passed, and the monkey heard that the young Maharani's son was about to be married. There were guests in the kingdom, presents poured into the young Maharani's house and everybody thought that the young Maharani's son was thereafter to be placed upon the throne. This distressed the monkey very much. He took leave of his 'mother' and walked miles and miles, and at last he came to another kingdom and obtained an interview with the ruler there. The monkey told him that he had come from the kingdom of his own Maharajah, who had a fine-looking boy by the first Maharani, and that such a handsome prince was nowhere else to be found in the world. Would not he like to marry his daughter to this young prince?

This Maharajah was delighted with the idea. He had a lovely daughter, and he was trying to find a suitable bridegroom for her. When he and the monkey settled the terms, the monkey arranged everything for the wedding and fixed the date for it. Then he returned to his mother and said : "Mother, I have done it all,"





The Maharani asked in a surprised tone :
“What ‘all’ have you done?”

“Oh, I have found a lovely Princess to be your daughter-in-law ”

“But where is my son?” exclaimed the Maharani.
“How can I have a daughter-in-law without a son?”

“Never mind about a son, mother, it will be all right.”

“Oh monkey, monkey, after all you are a monkey. How can you talk like that of serious things?”

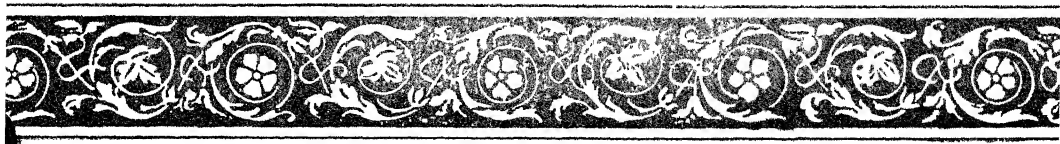
“I am going to the Maharajah,” said the monkey,
“to tell him of the wedding.”

The poor Maharani burst into tears, and said : “I wish you would not trifle with this matter any longer. The Maharajah has been very kind to me, but if he gets to hear of this, I shall be beheaded.”

The monkey tried to console her, by telling her he had a definite object in view, and he said : “Mother, I am going to get a lot of milk. Will you cook it well and make it into *khur*, and make a doll of the *khur*?”

The Maharani cried bitterly, and said : “Monkey, monkey, save me from this. I shall be killed, and you will be killed. Do stop your child’s play.”

“Have courage, mother, have strength of mind,” said the monkey. “You are the first Maharani; why should you not have your proper position?”





“But you are doing everything which goes against my interest,” said the Maharani.


But the monkey had vanished in the meantime. Presently he brought many *seers* of milk and asked the Maharani to thicken it by boiling and make the doll. Then he left her and went to the Maharajah. Everybody was talking of the wedding of the young Maharani’s son and people were very busy in the city.

This prince, however, was married to a girl neither pretty nor clever. The bride came to the State and all began to enquire: “Why did our Maharajah bring such an ugly daughter-in-law?” Some said: “The young Maharani is ugly, and that is why she has chosen a daughter-in-law like herself.”

Her son’s one idea was that when the Maharajah died he would become Maharajah. The poor Maharajah felt very miserable about it all, and now that the monkey prevented his visiting his elder wife, the Maharajah had no peace of mind, for the elder Maharani was so good and loving that, whenever he had been to see her, he had found happiness and peace.

The monkey found the Maharajah seated on the throne. After doing homage to him, the monkey said: “Maharajah, my little brother is going to get married to a beautiful little princess. Will you not hold a grand wedding-feast on his account as well?”






By that time the Maharajah had been rather displeased with the monkey, because he would not let him see the elder Maharani's son. His courtiers and servants had found this out. So, when the monkey spoke of the wedding, they all laughed at him.

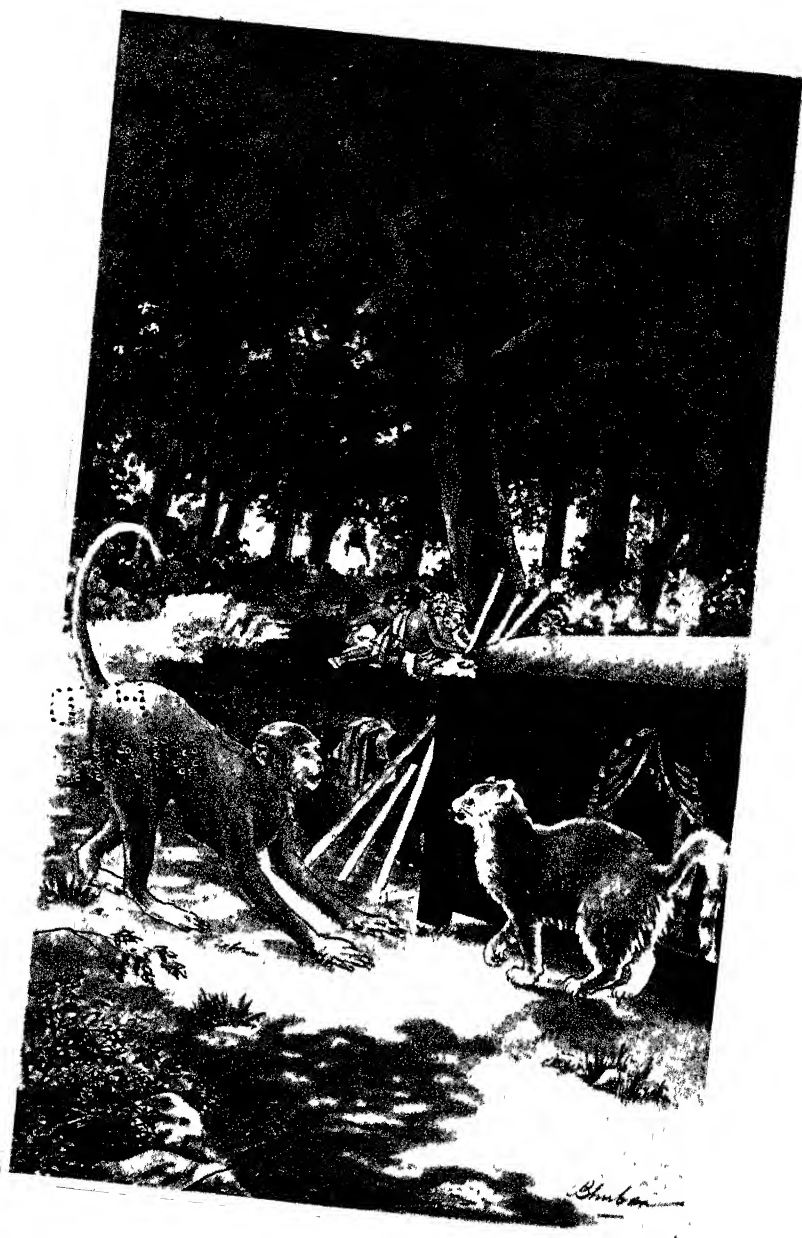
The Maharajah answered : "May I see the boy to-day?"

"Not to-day, Your Majesty. When my brother brings his bride you shall see the bride and the bridegroom together. This I promise faithfully."

The Maharajah ordered a *palki* and a few servants for the elder Maharani's son.

When the monkey returned home he found that the elder Maharani had cooked the milk and made some *khir*, and with it had made a beautiful big doll, which she now dressed in a red silk costume. The musicians were playing outside, and the *palki* was ready for the bridegroom. The monkey shut all the doors of the house and had the *palki* placed in the inner courtyard. There were only two people who saw the bridegroom, and they were the elder Maharani and the monkey. The *khir* doll was carried into the *palki* and the monkey closed the doors of it. He asked the Maharani to open the front door and call in the *palki*-bearers, and they carried the *palki* out. The musicians played, as the procession set forth, and in the middle of the procession







was the *palki* and the monkey walked by the side of it.

They walked miles and miles and miles. They all got tired and hungry, and, one by one, almost all the escort left the *palki*. One day, the bearers put the *palki* down, as they wanted a rest, and the monkey fell asleep under a tree. While they all rested, a big cat got into the *palki* and ate up the doll. The monkey woke up and went to the *palki* and the big cat jumped out of it. The cat was frightened, seeing the monkey, and the monkey got furious, seeing the cat. The cat ran, and the monkey followed. The cat climbed up a tree, and the monkey went up after it. For a long time the monkey chased the cat, till both got tired.

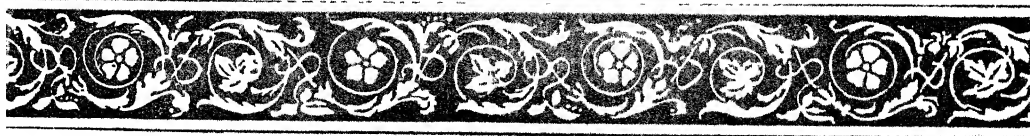
Then the monkey said : "As you have eaten up my *khur* doll, I want you to replace it at once."

"I have eaten it ;" said the cat, "how can I give it back to you?"

"I will have no excuse," said the monkey, "I just want my doll back."

Cats are supposed to be the carriers of the goddess Shashti. She is the goddess who brings children into this earth.

So this cat, frightened at the monkey's threat that unless she replaced the *khur* doll, he would kill her, said : "Oh, monkey, monkey, don't kill me. I'll give





you a boy. My goddess has plenty of lovely children. Follow me."

She led him through the jungle to a cave, and through the cave the monkey went underground, where he found hundreds of boys, of all ages, playing. The cat whispered to the monkey: "Choose whom you like "

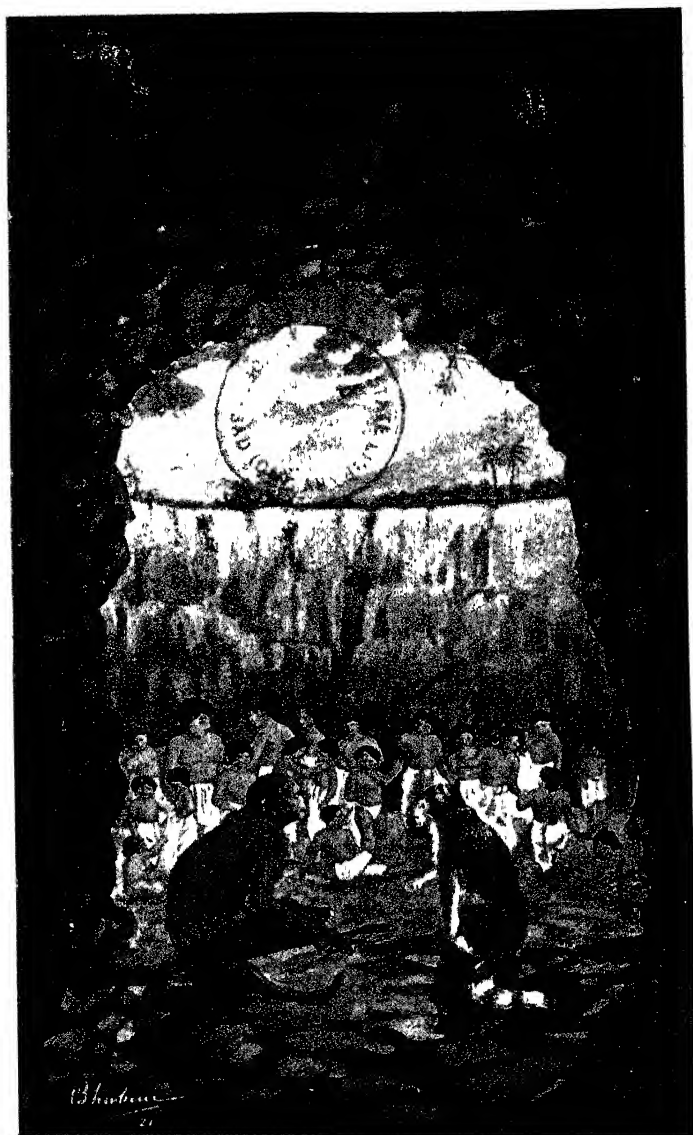
The monkey chose the finest youth in the hall and took him by the hand and walked back to the *palki*. The monkey looked very happy now. After a few days they entered the house of the bride, where great preparations were made for the wedding. The bridegroom had a hearty welcome. The Maharajah was greatly rejoiced to see such a handsome bridegroom come to wed his beautiful daughter.

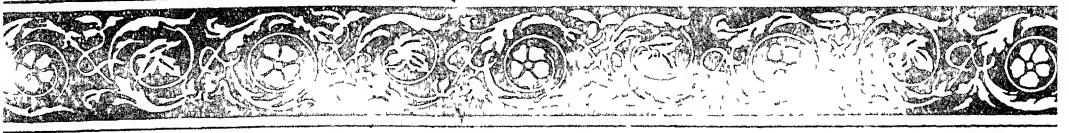
Meanwhile, at home the elder Maharani, after the monkey had left, threw herself on the floor and began to cry.

"Why did I bring this monkey into my house?" she cried. "What made me think of a monkey, when the Maharajah asked me to choose a present? A monkey is a monkey, after all, an animal of the jungle. The Maharajah will get to know the truth, and I shall be beheaded."

She had no food and no sleep, all the time the monkey was away. The Maharajah heard that most of








the servants, who had gone with the monkey, had returned, and he began to suspect that something was wrong. But a few days later, a great procession entered the kingdom, consisting of elephants, camels, out-riders and *palkis*, and, in a gold *mahapaya* (bridal *palki*) were the bride and the bridegroom. The citizens thought they had never seen more beautiful faces. Trumpets and conch-shells were sounded, and at the small house of the elder Maharani the procession stopped.

The Maharani cried aloud : "The Maharajah has sent for me and I am to go in a procession to be killed ! To be killed, for the monkey ! To be killed, because I am in disgrace ! Oh, why have I no son ? If I had but a son to-day, I would have been saved from this disgrace."

While she was crying thus, she heard the voice of the monkey, calling her, "Mother, mother, open the door, and welcome the bride and bridegroom."

He began to knock loudly at the door, and at last the Maharani opened it. To her great surprise, she saw a grand, gold *mahapaya* waiting at her door, with the bride and the bridegroom in it. The monkey opened the door of the *mahapaya*, and the newly-married couple stepped out. The Maharani kissed them, and while she was doing *varan* (the welcoming ceremony) to them in the courtyard, the Maharajah came and was greatly





pleased with the beauty of his supposed son and daughter-in-law.

After the marriage the Maharajah frequently came to the elder Maharani's house, and the more he saw of her son the more pleased he was and the more did he love the youth.

One day he said to the elder Maharani : "You are my first wife and your son is my rightful heir," and he made over to him his kingdom and his throne. He turned out the young Maharani, with her son and daughter-in-law, from the palace; and the elder Maharani lived happily there for the rest of her life, with her son and daughter-in-law.

The new prince was loved by his father, and all the people of the State, and the Monkey proved to be the best of friends the Maharajah and the Maharani ever had.





SABAR KARO


A Maharajah had three girls but no son. He loved all his daughters well, with perhaps a little extra love given to his youngest. They were all very beautiful to look at and most accomplished. His State was rich and wide-spread. He was getting on in years and one afternoon he thought he would tell his girls what he was going to give them. The girls came to the big *Durbar* hall where the father was seated on a high, golden throne. They paid homage to their father, and with clasped hands stood in front of the throne. He called the eldest girl to his side and asked her whom she loved most in this world.

"You, father," cried the girl, "Best of fathers, I love you most."

"But will you always love me so, my child?" asked the father.

"Yes, for ever and for ever, I shall love you most."

So the father, very much pleased, signed a parchment saying that a large part of his rich kingdom should be given to this girl. Then he called the second one to him, and asked her the same question. "My girl, whom do you love most in this world?"



“Dear father,” said the second girl, “need you ask the question? I shall always love you.”

“But will you love me just the same in future as you love me now?”

“Yes, father, without doubt I shall love you, always the same and for ever.”

The father looked very happy and signed another paper, making over another great portion of the kingdom to the second daughter. The third one was waiting at the foot of the throne. The father called her whom he loved most tenderly, saying, “Now, my little one, come and tell your father what *you* think of him.”

She came up to the throne, touched his feet, and with clasped hands stood, looking at him reverently. The father, taking her hand, said: “My child, my little girl, whom do you love most?”

“You, father, I love you most, *now*.”

“Will you love me always the same?”

“When I am married, father, my husband will be the first in my heart and you will be the second.”

“What!” said the angry father, pushing the child away from him. “Say that you are sorry for what you have said and that you will love your father more than anybody in this world.”

The poor little girl looked frightened. In a trembling voice she answered: “Father, I am sorry to





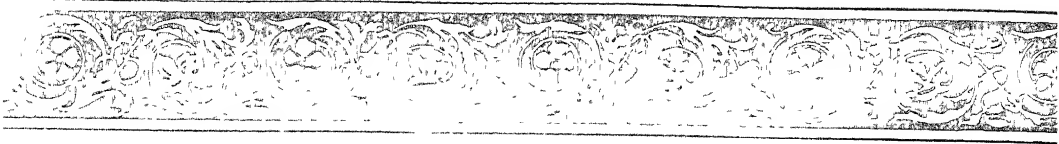
have annoyed you, but I have spoken the truth. I love you, I respect you; and you come in my thoughts, in my life, first *now*, but when I am married, my husband will be above all others. *He* will be the first; *he* will come before everything and everybody "

The father tried to make her understand that unless she withdrew what she had said she would get nothing from him, not a copper pice, but the girl, with clasped hands, said, "Father, I beg of you, I implore you to hear me, I have said what is true. I have spoken only the truth."

The Maharajah was furious and sent for his wife, and before all his officials and the other two girls, said : "My Queen, take this girl of yours to your apartment. Punish her, lock her in, till she repents and takes back the words she has said just now."

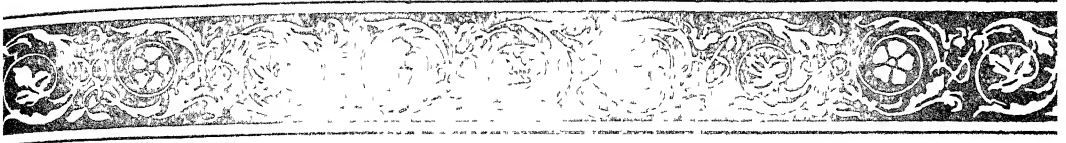
The Maharani, on hearing this, looked pitifully at the girl, as she knew well that the girl would get nothing if she did not please her father. Then she looked at her husband's enraged face, and taking the girl by the hand she walked out of the *Durbar* hall to go to her private apartments. The mother, in loving words and ways, pressed her, but it was of no use. The girl would not unsay her words. Her mother threatened to punish her. Even this had no effect on the girl. Then she said to her mother, with clasped hands, her





eyes filled with tears, "Mother, you have taught me to speak the truth, and you have told me that a husband should be the first in a woman's life, and mother, I have vowed, should I ever marry, that my husband should be the first in my love. How can you wish me, mother, to speak an untruth? If I withdraw what I have said to father it will not be acting truthfully."

The Queen saw that it would be useless to argue with the girl any more. By that time the father had come to his chambers and was anxious to know what was being done, and on hearing that the girl was obstinate, he decided that, then and there, he would divide what was left between the other girls. Then he called his officials, and gave the remaining part of his kingdom, divided into halves, to the elder girls. He told the Queen that the youngest girl was to be sent to the jungle that very night, and gave the necessary orders to his servants and officers, to take the girl in a *palki* and leave her in the midst of a thick jungle from whence she might never return. The servants obeyed and the poor girl was carried in a *palki* to the jungle. The Maharajah ordered that, in a separate *palki*, food for a fortnight should be carried also. These two *palkis* were left in the thick forest. They all went with the little princess, with torch-lights and drums, but they left her in the deserted jungle, where nothing was heard




but the cries of the wild animals. It was a dark night and looked darker still when the torch-lights disappeared. The sound of the drums and the cries of the men had stopped. The poor little girl peeped through the door of the *palkı* and was alarmed to find that she was alone in that jungle. The roaring of tigers seemed so near that she closed the door of the *palkı* quickly and began to cry. Tigers, jackals, all the wild animals, worried her and frightened her the whole night, as she longed with impatience for the dawn, to see the sun rise.

When morning came, to her great delight she found the jungle to be a different sight from what she found it the night before. She got out of her *palkı*, and went to the nearest lake, had her bath and then returned and took some food. Then she began to wander about in the jungle. The deer, the peacocks, all came to her as if she also belonged to the forest. When evening drew near she again heard the wild animals; and she locked herself in her *palkı*. Next day she found a number of peacock's feathers lying around her *palkı*. The peacocks had eaten the food that she threw to them after her meals and they said: "We must show our gratitude to the princess for having given us such delicious food in the depths of the jungle."

Day after day she gathered the peacock's feathers; then at last one day she thought of making fans of them,





and so she did, and they were fine fans, too. But what would she do with such fine fans in the forest? Who would buy them? Then a happy thought came into her mind. She would go to the nearest village and sell them. The princess, in disguise, carried the fans to a city not very far from the forest and she was pleasantly surprised when a buyer told her they were very valuable and fine pieces of work. She sold them all in a short while and made an enormous sum of money. She did not know what to do with it. The two *palkis* were filled of silver and gold coins. Then the princess told some wood-cutters to cut down the trees and clear a piece of land in the midst of the forest. They did so and by and by this little piece of land was made larger and larger, till it became a great kingdom. She caused to be built on the land, houses, both large and small, and market-places and shops, and gardens and lakes, and in the midst stood a fine palace, and there lived the princess as queen of this new kingdom.

One day her father, the Maharajah, was out hunting, and becoming very thirsty he asked his followers to find some water or he would die of thirst. They all went in search of water and he got more and more thirsty, and as there was no sign of any of his followers returning, he left his horse and set out on foot till he reached his daughter's kingdom and the lake,





which was just in front of the palace. He walked down the stone steps, bathed his head and face and had a good drink of that delicious water; and sat there a while, wondering who could be the king of this kingdom and who could have built the fine palace in the midst of the forest. There had been nothing here a few years before but wild animals, all round this place. While he was thinking thus, one of the Princess's maids walked down the steps. Looking at him, she stopped and asked who he was and where he came from.

"I was hunting and was very thirsty and came here for a drink."

"Is it not a nice and peaceful kingdom?" asked the maid.

"Yes," replied the Maharajah. "But who is the King of this kingdom?"

"King? No, we have a queen to rule this kingdom."

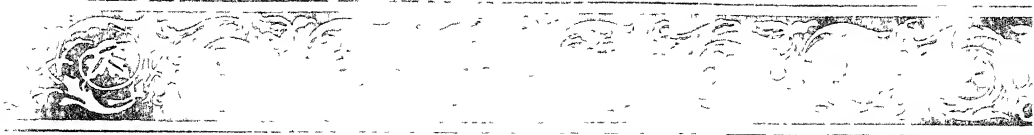
"Queen!" exclaimed the Maharajah, "Is she married?"

"No; her father treated her cruelly and she was left in this jungle, and now she is queen of the jungle "

All the past came back to the Maharajah in a moment, and he wondered if it could be his little girl. Impatiently he spoke: "May I see your Maharani?"

The maid went back to the Maharani and told her





about the traveller, whom she had found seated on the stone steps. The Maharani knew at once that it was her father, but she hesitated for a while, and told the maid to tell him "*Sabar karo*" (just wait). The maid did not understand the words *Sabar karo* and she wandered about the palace for a while and then got frightened, thinking her mistress might punish her. So with a heavy heart she walked through the kingdom to another city, where she found many brilliant shops. At one of these she stopped and asked for *Sabar karo*

"Have you got *Sabar karo* to sell?" she asked.


"Yes," said the shop-keeper, and handed a beautiful golden box to her. She paid the man for it as she thought best, and took the box to her mistress. The Maharajah had waited for a long time on the steps and then he went away, while in the palace the Maharani forgot all about the *Sabar karo*.

It was late in the evening when the maid returned, with the box in her hand, and placed it before the Maharani. The princess asked: "What is this box? What does it contain?"

"Your Majesty," said the maid, "this is the *Sabar karo*."

The Maharani looked very much pleased and opened the box. The maids and the ladies-in-waiting left her in her room alone. When the Princess opened





the box, to her great delight, she saw that in the first tray there were some jewels, a beautiful necklace, a pair of bangles and a pair of ear-rings. She adorned herself with them, then lifted the tray, and in the second tray was a nice gold-handled looking-glass. She looked in it and was pleased with herself and smiled. Then she lifted the second tray and in the third and last tray was a lovely peacock-feather fan. She took it in her hand and began to fan herself. While she was doing so, a handsome young prince stood before her. She looked at him and blushed, and then in a shy voice asked, "Where do you come from?"

"You called me," was the answer, "I am a Maharajah."

"But, please Sir, I never called you "

"Yes, fair Princess, you called me; you fanned me here."

These visits were continued, and they fell in love with each other. One day the young Maharajah said : "We must get married soon." So the wedding-day was fixed, and invitations were sent to the Maharani's parents and to her sisters. The father and the mother were very happy to learn that their loved child was still alive and was going to get married to a rich Maharajah.

In due time they all arrived and found the kingdom decorated and illuminated for the occasion. When they



entered the palace, the Maharani welcomed them. How passionately did the poor parents cry over her! She was the same sweet daughter to them. They were very happy at meeting after such long years. The father looked old and grey. The mother related the whole story and all her woes to the girl they loved best.

“Do you know, my child,” said the mother, “that your father hasn’t got a corner to himself? Because he was angry with you, he gave his kingdom divided into halves, to your two elder sisters, and they are most unkind to us and are always turning us out of their palaces.”

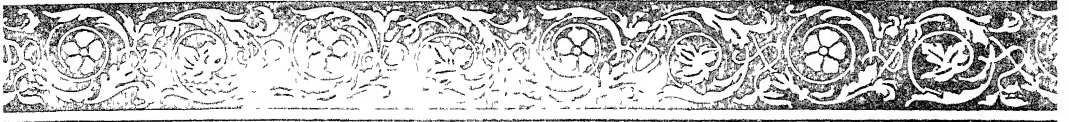
The Princess cried over this and said: “Mother, you and dear father must come and live with me here.”

While the mother and father and the youngest daughter were talking thus, the two elder girls wandered about the palace, going from room to room, from hall to hall, examining every piece of furniture and every ornament, and at the end became frantically jealous of their younger sister. One said to the other: “What! that girl, whom father sent to the jungle, to be so rich as all this? She does not deserve it!”

The other said: “She will be richer still, as she is going to marry a Maharajah, and a rich Maharajah, too,” and they whispered to each other, and laid a plot.

On the wedding-evening, when everything was

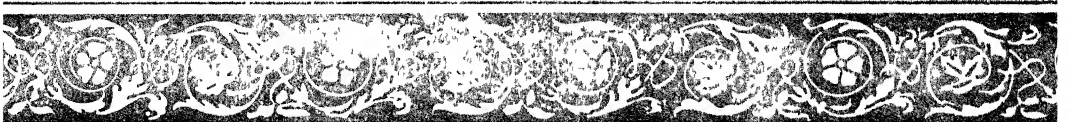


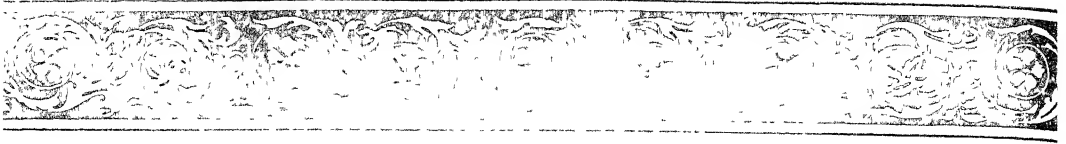


gay and bright in the palace, the bride looked beautiful and was covered with jewels. The father and the mother sat near the bride, talking happily. The two elder sisters went and arranged the sitting-room and the velvet seats for bridegroom and bride. The bridegroom came with a large escort, looking strikingly handsome. He promised to take the bride home on the following day. As he kept the name of his kingdom a secret, no one knew where his State was.

The wedding ceremony was performed with great pomp, and both bride and bridegroom looked perfectly happy and talked of their long journey of the morrow. Most precious gifts were given to the bride by the bridegroom. These made the elder sisters more jealous than ever. The bridegroom, towards the middle of the night, cried out that he would have to return immediately, and looked very pale, as if he was in great pain. The bride had felt hitherto so happy that this sudden announcement fell upon her like a thunder-clap, and she asked, lovingly : "My husband, my Maharajah, are you ill?"

"Yes, my darling," he said, "I am ill," and after these few words he disappeared. The poor bride wept away the rest of the night. She knew not where to go, whom to ask. Next morning, when her parents and sisters heard of it, her parents wept, but her sisters





bade her goodbye and said they could not stay away from their kingdoms very long.

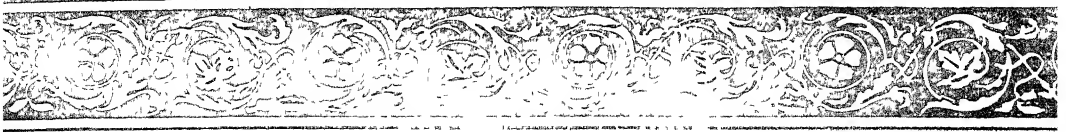
Days passed and months. As there was no news of her husband the unhappy girl became very anxious and looked sad. Often she had the box *Sabar karo* before her, often she put the jewels on, often she fanned herself with the peacock-feather fan, but all in vain; her husband, the Maharajah, did not appear again. She felt so miserable that one night she fled from her kingdom, asking her others to look after the State; and she told her maids : “If I ever find my husband, I shall return, but not otherwise ”

She dressed in a very plain *sari* and walked on and on, for miles and miles a day. One afternoon while she was seated under a tree she saw a big snake crawling up the tree, where there was a nest of birds, with little ones in it. She broke off a branch of the tree and killed the snake and thus saved the little birds. After the sun set, when the parent birds returned to the nest, she heard the little birds talking. The little ones said : “Dad do you know we would all have been killed to-day,” and the mother-bird excitedly spoke and said : “Why, my dears, what has happened?”

The little ones said : “A big snake was coming up to the nest.”

“Who saved you?” asked the mother.





“The kind lady who is sleeping under the tree, mother,” said the little birds. The mother-bird said to her mate, “We must do something to show our gratitude to this kind person. If she had not killed the snake, I would have lost all my dear little ones to-day.” The other bird said. “I must get a little herb to-morrow and I shall throw it down to her, and if any of her dear ones ever get ill, she has but to give them that and they will be cured.”

The disguised Maharani heard all this, and when morning came she saw the bird throw the little root of a grass down on her *sari*. She carefully tied it in her *sari* and continued her journey. After a month she arrived at a State which, by enquiries, she found to be her husband’s kingdom.

The disguised princess took a hut at the far end of the city and pretended to be a hermit, who knew a great deal about medicines. She heard that the Maharajah of the State was very ill and had been in bed for months, could do no State business, could see no one, and was always in great pain. The disguised princess asked many citizens if she might have a chance of seeing the Maharajah, as she felt she could cure him. At first they all laughed at her, then they treated her as a mad woman, but at last, the news travelled up to the high officials, and they said : “As we have tried all the best





doctors of the country in vain, we might give this hermit a chance.”

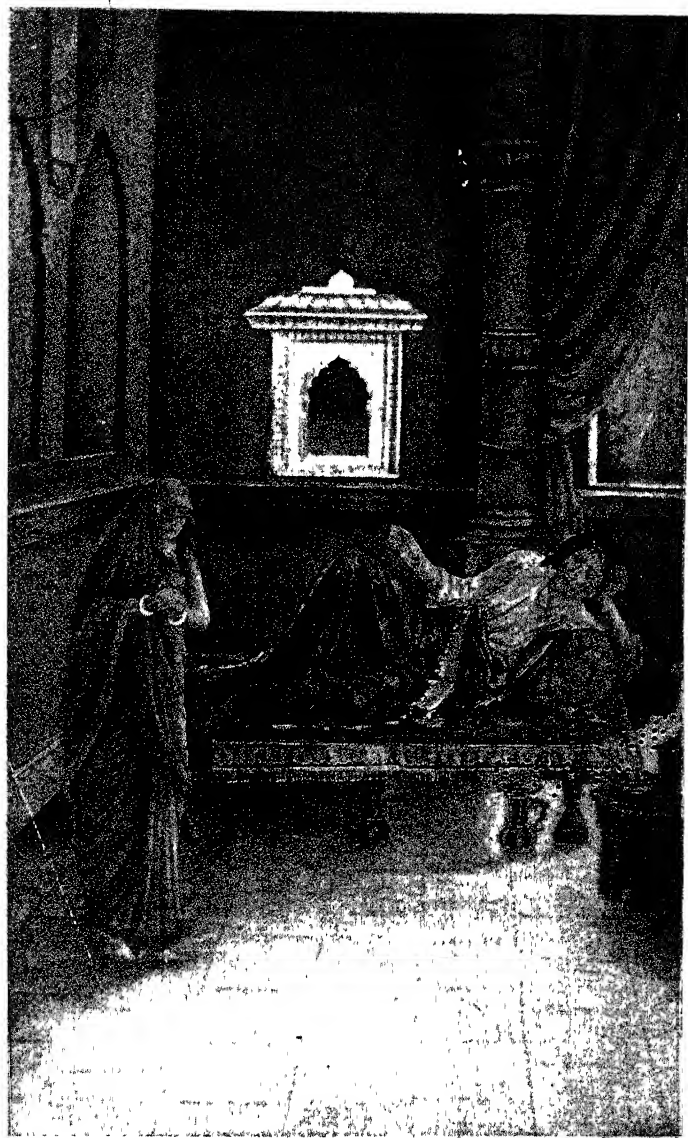
The news came to the Maharajah and it was welcome news to him, as he was always in agony, and was longing to be relieved of pain. He readily gave permission for the hermit to see him. The beautiful princess was in disguise. She had darkened her face and covered half of it with her head-dress. Her long hair was in tangles, and nobody could recognise her. She came and found the poor Maharajah lying ill in bed. The young princess went to his feet and pretended she was feeling his fever but she silently did homage and then came and sat by him and asked him what his ailment was. Then she gave him some medicine and the Maharajah was better the next day and within a few days she cured him. Then she said to him : “I must go now.”

“Oh no,” said the Maharajah, “you must be rewarded first.”

“Rewarded !” said a gentle voice, and the Maharajah looked at that face that was so like his beautiful young bride’s. Could it be she? No, impossible ! She said : “I want no money, I want nothing. I came to nurse you, Your Highness, to serve you, and I am happy to find you better.”

But the Maharajah would not hear of her going





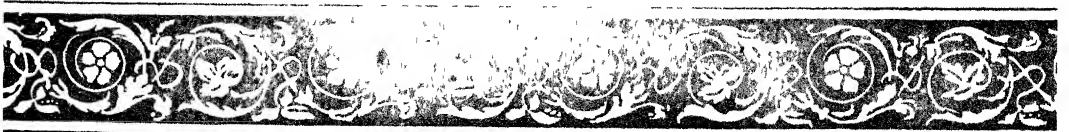


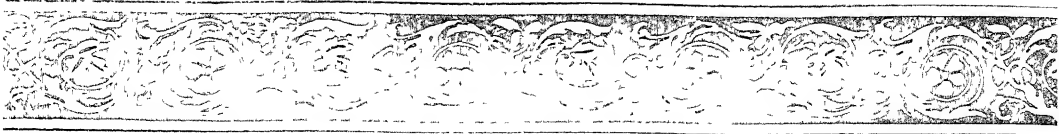
away without some present. Then at last she said .
“If Your Highness is so kind and will insist on my having a little gift, may I have the ring off your third finger?”

The Maharajah was startled at this. The ring had been given to him by the bride on their wedding-night, and she had made him promise never to part with it, never to take it off his finger ;—and how could he now break his promise? Yet he must give something to this kind woman who had saved his life. Then, as he hesitated, she pretended to be going away, leaving him without a present, so he stopped her and gave the ring to her, looking as if unwilling to part with it. The hermit, the disguised Maharani, looked very happy to get the ring and, thanking him, left the room.

After some weeks she came back to her own kingdom, and when she recovered from her fatigue and began to look as beautiful as ever, once again did she dress herself and had her *Sabar karo* box near her. She adorned herself with the jewels, looked at herself in the mirror, and began to fan herself with the peacock-feather fan. And lo! there stood her handsome, loving husband in front of her. He came near and sat by her, but she pretended to look cross.

“Why haven’t you been to see me all this time?” she said, “Do you know you left me on our wedding-





night and you haven't been here for months, and you never even sent a little message or any news of yourself I am so hurt."

The Maharajah said fondly, "My lovely wife, I have been so ill, I could not move out of my bed for months."

"Ill for months!" and she pretended to look much surprised, "and who cured you?"

"It is a strange story, my dear wife. All the doctors thought it to be a hopeless case. A hermit came and cured me."

"A woman?" asked she in a jealous voice.

"Oh, but she was a hermit," said the Maharajah, and she smiled at that.

Then she asked him what had happened to him, and the Maharajah told his wife that the velvet seat on which he sat on his wedding-evening was made of needles and pins, and that he suffered agonies from it for months. The wife told him it was made by her two elder sisters. While they were talking she looked at his right hand, and asked: "Where is my ring? What have you done with it?"

"I have lost it," said the Maharajah in an uncomfortable voice.

"Oh, no," she smilingly answered, "I am sure you have given it to a woman."



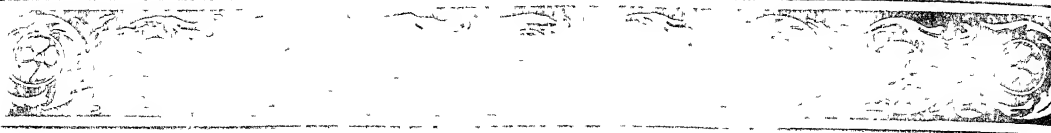


“Yes,” said the guilty husband, “Forgive me, my dear wife, I did give it to a woman, and it was the woman who saved my life, the hermit woman.”

To his great surprise, when the wife put her right hand on his, he saw the ring on her finger. Then the wife related the whole story to her husband and he loved and admired her all the more, for she was the one who had saved his life. They were once more happy in their jungle-kingdom, and once again they asked the sisters and the parents to the palace. The sisters confessed their guilt and they were made slaves in the palace, and the father took back his State from the daughters, and they all lived happily. The *Sabar karo* box had brought them luck and was kept in the kingdom with great care.

49





DUP RAJ

There was a Maharajah who had seven sons. The six elder ones were those of a very proud and haughty Maharani and the youngest was the son of a sweet and gentle Maharani, who was the first wife. After the youngest was born, the Maharajah sent the mother and her boy right out of the kingdom. The young prince proved a good son to his mother, and a most loyal subject to his father.

One night, the Maharajah had a dream that somewhere there was a tree, the foot of which was of silver, the trunk of gold, the branches of diamond, the leaves of pearls and the fruit of *manik* (a most precious stone); and that a peacock from Paradise came to eat the fruit. On the following morning, the Maharajah spoke of his dream to his sons and his subjects, and said that, if any one of his sons could show him that tree in reality, he would get his kingdom.

The six elder sons, when they heard of it, were all very much excited, and, one by one, they came to their father, and said: "Your Majesty, I shall find out this tree and shall prove to be the worthy son."

The Maharajah passed orders that whatever these sons required for the journey should be given to them





They each had a number of elephants, camels, boats, and soldiers, and nothing was denied them. Though the six sons were given everything they wanted, they took a long time in leaving the State and saying goodbye to their friends.

The youngest son had also heard of his father's dream through the servants, and he came to his mother, saying : "Mother, bless me ; I am going on a long journey. If I succeed in bringing the Maharajah's dream to reality, I shall return."

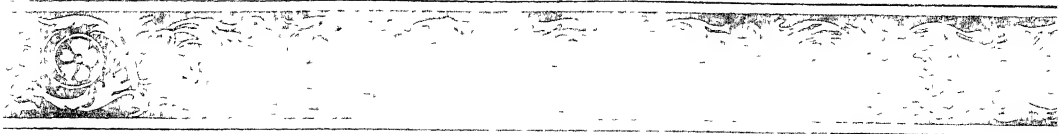
The mother cried over it, and said : "Oh my son, how can you talk of such a thing? Do not forget, my son, that I am the deserted wife and you are the forsaken child. The Maharajah has disowned you."

"Mother," said he, in a loving voice, "I am still my father's son. I may not be worthy of his name or of his position, but I am his own son and he is my own father, and I wish to be a dutiful son."

Then the mother sadly gave way to the son, and, with many a tear, bade him goodbye. The young prince went to the State Darbar and, after paying homage to his father, he stood in front of the throne, with clasped hands, and said : "Your Majesty, may I be allowed to try and bring your dream to reality?"

The Maharajah was very vexed at first, because the young prince had been so late in coming. In a





harsh voice he said : “Yes. What do you require as your outfit ?”

“I require only a horse,” was the reply.

“Only a horse !” exclaimed the Maharajah.


The courtiers began to whisper among themselves : “He is a stupid boy. Why did he not ask for elephants and camels, as the other princes had done ?”

“And nothing else ?” asked the Maharajah again.


“No, nothing else, besides your blessing,” and he went up to the Maharajah and touched his feet. This moved the Maharajah. None of his elder sons had asked him for a blessing, and he now spoke from his heart and said : “My boy, I bless thee ; mayest thou live to prove a worthy son !”

He asked his officers to take the young prince to the stables and give him any horse he wished to have. In the royal stables there were hundreds and thousands of fine horses. One by one, the prince passed all the stalls, and the officers with him were surprised that he did not take one of the fine riding-horses. After seeing numbers of these chargers, he came to a lean horse, and he took that one out of the stall and bade farewell to the officers, and said : “Tell His Majesty I have taken this horse,” and the next moment he disappeared.

When the courtiers saw the young man select that horse, they wondered how he, a prince, could be so







stupid. But when they saw him mount it, and like a flash of lightning gallop away from the stables, they said : “He is a worthy son of his father.”

Before they returned to the Maharajah, he was told by his elder sons that the youngest had chosen the thin, dying horse from the stable. The Maharajah felt sure that his youngest son would never return home. However, the horse could fly, and the young prince went quickly from kingdom to kingdom, and crossed the oceans, till he came to a certain kingdom, where he tied his horse to a tree. He went and sat on the riverside steps, which were all made of silver. After a while he saw a silver girl coming down the steps, with a silver *gharra* (pitcher) to carry water from the river.

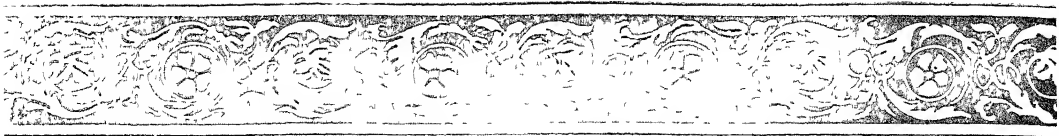
The young prince asked : “Fair maiden, who are you, and where are you going to take the water?”

“I am maid to my Queen,” she said. “This kingdom is the Silver Raj, and our Queen is the Silver Queen.”

“How lovely must she be !” said the prince, “May I see her ?”

“I shall go and give her your message,” said the silver girl.

After a while, the silver maid returned, and with a large number of silver girls, the Silver Queen came, and found the prince still standing on the steps.



The prince, with clasped hands, said : “Oh, Your Majesty, grant me this favour. I have come here in quest of my father’s dream-tree. Be gracious, and kind, and help me to bring that dream to reality.”

Then he related his father’s dream to the Silver Queen.

“Oh, Prince,” answered the Silver Queen, in a silvery voice, “I would be only too happy to help you. But go to my elder sister who lives in the Gold Raj, the next kingdom to this, and I shall wait for her commands.”

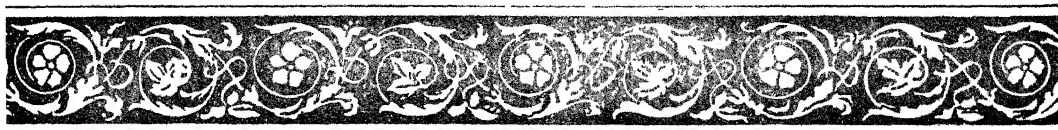
The prince, after thanking her, mounted his horse, which could fly in the air, cross rivers, go through the jungle and gallop over the hills. He rode fast and came to the Gold Raj. He saw the golden steps leading down to the river, and he sat there as before, and a golden girl came, with a golden *gharra*, to carry water from the river.

The prince asked her : “Fair maiden, who are you, and where are you going to take that water?”

“I am maid to my Queen,” said the girl. “This is the Gold Raj, and our Queen is the Gold Queen.”

“How lovely must she be !” said the prince, “May I see her?”

“I shall go and give her your message,” said the golden girl.





She soon returned, and, with a number of golden girls, the Gold Queen came, and found the prince on the steps.

He said : "Oh, Your Majesty, grant me this favour. I have come to find out my father's dream-tree. Will you not help me?"

Then he related his father's dream to the Gold Queen.

"Oh, Prince," said the Gold Queen, in a golden voice, "I would be only too happy to help you. But go to my eldest sister who lives in the Diamond Kingdom, next to mine, and I shall wait for her commands."

The prince, after thanking her, mounted his horse. He rode fast, and came to the Diamond Raj, and sat on the diamond steps by the river. Presently a diamond girl came down the steps, carrying a diamond *gharra*, to fetch water from the river.

The prince asked her : "Fair maiden, who are you, and where are you going to take the water?"

"I am maid to my Queen," she answered. "This is the Diamond Raj, and our Queen is the Diamond Queen."

"How lovely must she be!" said the prince, "May I see her?"

"I shall go and give her your message," said the diamond girl.





She returned, and with her came a number of diamond girls and the Diamond Queen among them.

The prince said : "Oh, Your Majesty, grant me this favour. I wander about to bring my father's dream to reality. Will you not help me?"

Then he related his father's dream to the Diamond Queen.

"Oh, Prince," said the Diamond Queen, "I would be only too happy to help you. But go to my elder sister, who lives in the Pearl Kingdom, next to this one, and I shall wait for her commands."

The prince, after thanking her, mounted his horse. He rode fast, and came to the Pearl Raj. Here he dismounted, and sat, as before, on the pearl steps by the river.

Presently a pearl girl came down the steps, carrying a *gharra* of pearls, to fetch water from the river.

The prince asked her : "Fair maiden, who are you, and where are you going to take the water?"

"I am maid to my Queen," she answered. "This is the Pearl Raj, and our Queen is the Pearl Queen."

"How lovely must she be!" said the prince, "May I see her?"

"I shall go and give her your message," said the pearl girl.

After a while she returned, and there came a





number of pearl girls, and with them the Pearl Queen.

The prince said : "Oh, Your Majesty, grant me this favour. I have come to find out my father's dream-tree. Will you not help me?"

Then he related his father's dream to the Pearl Queen.

"Oh, Prince," said the Pearl Queen, "I would be only too happy to help you. But go to my elder sister who lives in the *Manik* Kingdom, next to this one, and I shall wait for her commands."

Then he came to the *Manik* Raj. Again he sat on the steps, as he had done before. He waited and waited, a long time, and then a girl of *manik* came, with a *manik gharra*, and when she looked down at the prince, she said : "You, a man, here in this kingdom ! Do you know the name of this State? It is called the *Manik* Raj. No man has ever been allowed to stay here long. You had better be careful."

The prince asked : "May I not have an interview with your Queen?"

"Our Queen?—the *Manik* Queen? Do you know that if she saw you in the State, you would be beheaded at once?"

"But I am only a beggar," said the prince. "I have come to beg a favour."





“Beggar or no beggar, favour or no favour, our Queen will never see a man.”

“Never,” said the prince in a most surprised tone.

“No, never,” said the maid, “except the one she marries.”

“But how will she get married if she never gives herself the chance of seeing any man?” exclaimed the prince.

“Our *Manik* Queen holds a mirror in her hand all day long” answered the maid, “and if anybody, without her knowledge, puts the red mark on her forehead, she will marry that man.”

The prince thought for a while, and then thanked the maid for having kindly told him all this. When the maid had gone, he knew that his stay there was not safe; so he mounted his horse and went on the river. Early next morning, he, with his horse, was flying over the kingdom.

The *Manik* Queen was reclining on the terrace, and she suddenly saw such a large number of birds flying together, attracted by, and following the horse, that just for a moment she put down her mirror, to look at the birds, and the prince quickly flew down on his horse, and put the red spot on her forehead. Then he silently stood behind her couch.





“Oh, our Queen, our Queen, who has put the red spot on your forehead?” cried out all the ladies.

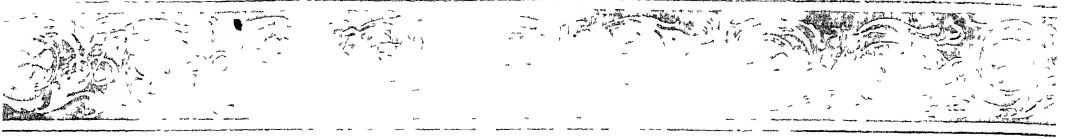
The Queen sat up, and from her mirror she found that they were right, and the red spot on her forehead was bright like a star. The prince was still standing quietly by, and, when the ladies looked round, they found him behind the palms.

The *Manik* Queen asked him to come near and tell her all that had happened, and when she heard of his father's dream, and how he had travelled and had seen all her younger sisters, she looked very happy. She thought she had never seen anyone so handsome, and with so good a face, as the prince. She gave orders that her wedding should be celebrated very soon, and then she said to the prince : “As you have married me, don't think that you have married only one. With me, you have married my four sisters, the Pearl Queen, the Diamond Queen, the Gold Queen, and the Silver Queen.”

The prince was only too happy on hearing this, and said : “My Queen, my *Manik* Queen, I am honoured, and I am proud to have such Queens as you all are, to be my wives.”

The other four queens came to the *Manik* Raj, and after the marriage ceremony was over, the *Manik* Queen asked : “Would you like to see your father's dream-tree now?”



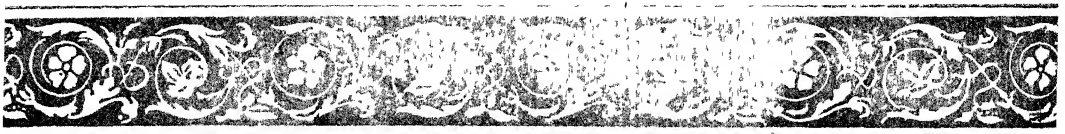


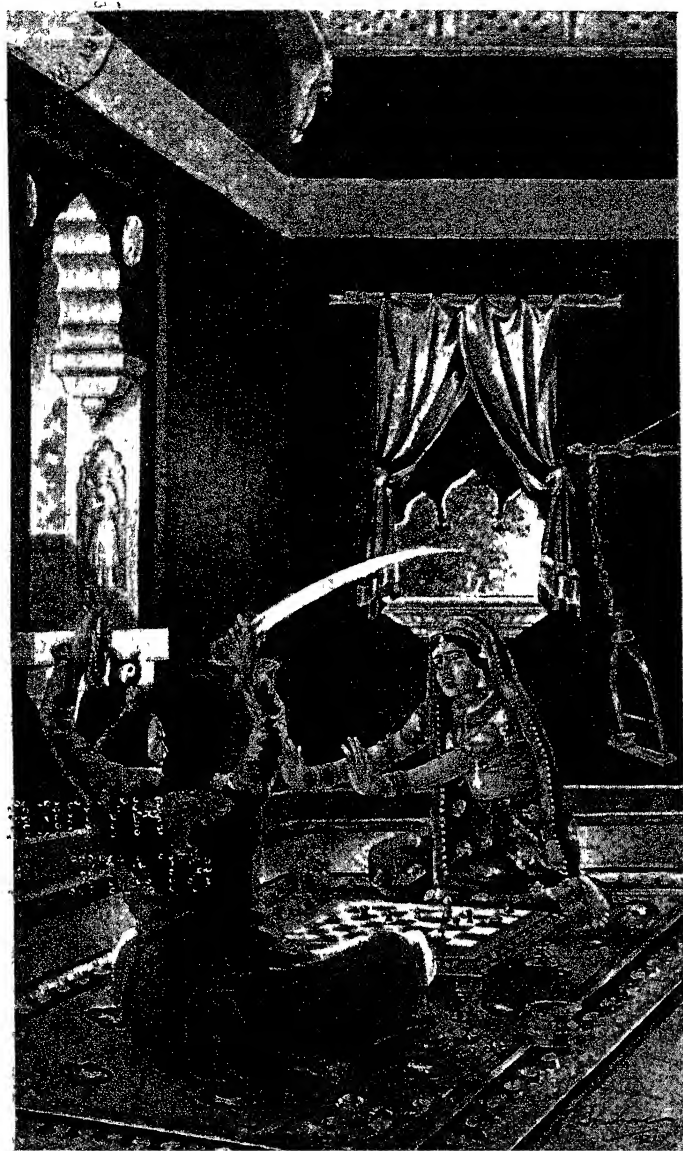
The prince was very much excited, and said : “If it please you, my Queen, may I?”

Then the Silver Queen began to dance and she became like the circle of a tree. The Gold Queen began to dance on it, and she became the trunk. Then the Diamond Queen danced over it, and she became the branches of the tree. The Pearl Queen began to dance, and she became the leaves, and the *Manik* Queen began to dance, and she became the fruit, and, as there is no such tree on earth, the bird from Paradise flew down to it, and when it pecked the fruit, all the five queens came to life again.

The prince was delighted to see the tree and to know that his father’s dream had come to reality. He set out, to return to his father’s kingdom. On his way back he stopped at another kingdom and heard that the Queen there was an unmarried lady. Her name was Lakshamani. Everybody who came to this State was taken prisoner, and the prince asked what the reason of it was. He was told that the Queen was so clever at chess that whoever came to the State was asked to have a game with her, and when he was defeated he was taken prisoner.

The prince said that he would have a game. They played for three days and three nights, and for two days and two nights the prince lost. He did not like the



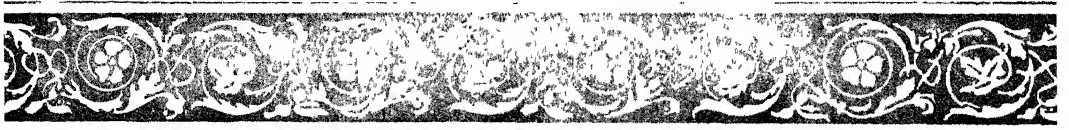


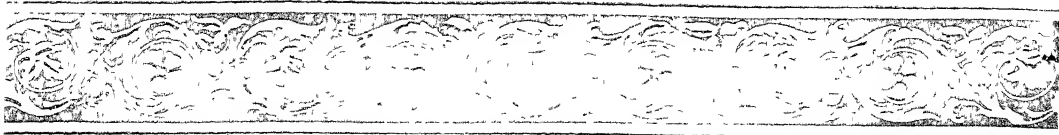


idea of being made a prisoner, as he was on his way back to tell his father of the dream-tree. He felt very miserable at the prospect of being defeated, and he wondered · “How is it that Lakshamani wins all the games?”

Suddenly he thought of the parrot, which always spoke to the Queen, while she played. On the morning of the third day, the prince asked Lakshamani if she would make a rule not to be disturbed, while they were playing their game. Lakshamani agreed to this, forgetting all about the parrot. Just as they began the game, and just as Lakshamani was on the point of losing, the parrot said something, and the prince saw that the moves of the chessmen were changed by Lakshamani and she began to win, and the prince knew at once that the parrot had something to do with her game at chess. He took his sword off his belt and cut off the parrot’s head.

Lakshamani cried out when he did this, and said : “The parrot was my luck.” After that, Lakshamani lost the game, during the third day and night. The Queen’s promise was that, if anybody defeated her in the game of chess, she would be his wife. It would not matter whether he was old or young, rich or poor, for she would have to wed him, whoever it was, who won the game.





When the game of chess was over, it was announced in the State that the Queen was going to get married to the prince. After the marriage, the prince released all the prisoners, and, to his surprise, he found amongst them his elder brothers. The prisoners were all to be allowed to go free, said the prince, except his brothers, who were to be first marked on the chest with hot iron. The brothers, nevertheless, thanked him for their release, and said they were very grateful to him for it. The prince gave orders for a number of boats to be got ready for their departure. The six princesses were in one boat and the seven brothers in another, and the courtiers and the camels and all the retinue were in the other boats. Thus they set out on the way back, to return to their father's kingdom.

The six elder brothers were very jealous of the youngest brother, and said among themselves: "With what face can we go back? We, who are so much older than our brother, have done nothing to find our father's dream-tree, and besides we have spent all the money and lost all that we had brought from our father."

They then made a secret plan among themselves. One day, they said to the youngest prince: "Let us have a game of chess," and, while they were playing on the deck of the boat, the brothers suddenly pushed the youngest prince over-board. On seeing this,





Lakshamani threw a floating mat to him and one of the other princesses threw a floating cushion. The young prince thus kept afloat, and the boats, meanwhile, reached the kingdom of the Maharajah.

After floating for some days, the young prince at last touched land near the house of a gardener and his wife in the kingdom of his father. The *malini* (gardener's wife) used to take flowers to the palace. That morning, as she went down the bank to wash her flowers she saw what she at first took to be a dead body floating in. She called her husband and they carried the prince up to their cottage and found he was still breathing. With their care and nursing the prince soon recovered, and the *malini* said to her husband: "As we have no children this will be our son." The *malini* gave him the name of Dup Raj.

The *malini* had been ordered to take flowers for the prayers, and garlands, for the six princesses every day. She brought Dup Raj the news that the Maharajah had six daughters-in-law, all living in a boat, who had taken a vow that they would not get out of their boat until somebody came, whom they were daily expecting. The disguised prince knew at once that these were his wives, and that they were expecting him to return, and he asked many questions to the *malini*, whom he addressed as "mother." The *malini* found that Dup Raj wanted





to make the flower-garlands for her, and that day, when she carried the flowers to the princesses, they all asked who had made such fine garlands.

“Oh, it was only my son,” said the pleased *malim*.

She was delighted that they liked the *malas* (garlands). “Oh, is he your own son?” they asked.

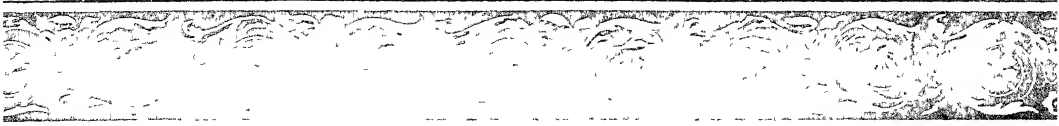
“No,” said the *malini*, rather hesitatingly. But after talking a little while, the princesses heard the whole story, and knew that this man, Dup Raj, was their beloved husband. After that, Dup Raj used to send a few written words with the garlands, which made the princesses very happy indeed, and they often gave handsome presents to the *malim*.

One day, Dup Raj said to the *malini*: “Have a drum beaten in the street to give notice to the citizens that your son, Dup Raj, will tell everyone why the princesses will not get out of their boat and go on shore.”

When the six brothers had returned, with the princesses, they had told their father that they had brought his dream to reality and would show all the people in the kingdom the tree that the Maharajah had dreamt of. The father had waited patiently, but as yet there was no sign of the tree, as all the princesses refused to leave their boat.

When the drum was beaten loud, and the news given out that Dup Raj, the *malim*’s son, was coming



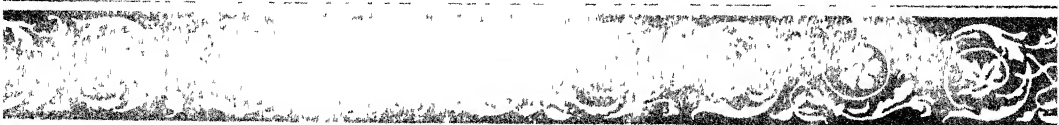



forward to tell the Maharajah and the citizens the truth about the princesses' remaining in the boat, all were excited over it, and waited impatiently.

That evening, Dup Raj, with the *malim*, went to the Court. He covered himself with sugar and cotton, and told his mother, the *malim*, to fan him now and again, whenever he cried out "Oh, the flies, the flies "

Dup Raj was so disguised that nobody could recognise him at the Court. People all looked eagerly at him, as he stood, ready to tell them the history. First he got the Maharajah to promise that, while he was speaking, no one should interrupt him nor leave the Darbar.

Dup Raj then began, and said: "There was a Maharajah, who had seven sons. The six elder ones were sons of the favourite wife, while the youngest son had been banished, with his mother, the first wife, from the kingdom. The Maharajah had a dream one night, that there was a tree, the foot of which was of silver, the trunk of gold, the branches of pearls, and the fruit of *manik*, and that a bird from Paradise came to eat the fruit. The Maharajah said that, if anyone of his sons could show him that tree in reality, he would give him the kingdom. The six elder sons came, one by one, to their father, and each one said he would find out the tree. The Maharajah passed orders that what-






ever the sons required for their journey should be given to them and nothing denied them; and they all asked for elephants and camels and horses and boats and soldiers."

While he was speaking, the elder brothers looked uncomfortable, and cried: "Turn Dup Raj out of the Court, or he shall be beheaded." Then Dup Raj cried out: "Oh, mother, the flies, the flies." And the *malim* fanned him as previously instructed.

He continued his story, saying: "The youngest son heard about his father's dream, and also went out in quest of the dream-tree, taking only a lean horse on which to ride. He dismounted in the Silver Kingdom and saw the Silver Queen, who told him to go for help to her elder sister, the Gold Queen. So he went to the Gold Kingdom and saw the Gold Queen, who sent him to her elder sister the Diamond Queen. He went to the Diamond Kingdom and saw the Diamond Queen, who sent him to the Pearl Kingdom, where he saw the Pearl Queen. She sent him to the *Manik* Kingdom, where he saw the *Manik* Queen and married her; and her four sisters also became his wives, and his five wives showed him his father's dream become a reality,—the tree of silver and gold and diamonds and pearls and *manik*, and the bird that came from Paradise to eat its fruit."



“Then the prince came to the kingdom of Lakshamani and played a game of chess with her. He won the game, and, according to the Queen’s promise to marry the man who defeated her in chess, she married him. Then the prince released all the men who had previously been defeated in playing chess with the Queen, and kept there as prisoners; and among the prisoners he found his elder brothers and released them too, after having marks burnt on their chests with a hot iron.”

At this, the elder brothers stood up, and said : “Your Majesty should turn this boy out. It is a great insult to have your sons spoken of thus. You know, our father, that we have brought you the dream realised, and your young son is dead, for where he went, nobody knows.”

Then Dup Raj cried out again : “Oh, mother, the flies, the flies.” And the *malini* fanned him as before.

The Maharajah was angry at this, and said : “How dare you, Dup Raj, speak thus of my sons?”

“Did you not promise, Your Majesty,” said Dup Raj, “that I should not be interrupted in the course of my story?”

“Yes, I did promise,” said the Maharajah.

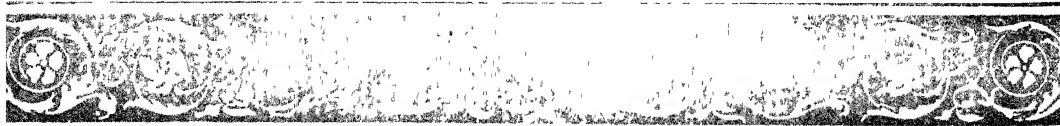
“And you also promised to help me, Your Majesty.”

"Yes, I did promise," said the Maharajah.

"Well, I beg of Your Majesty to make your six sons show their chests, and you will find that the hot-iron marks are there."

As the Maharajah had promised to help Dup Raj he could not refuse to have this done, and the marks were seen on the chests of his sons. Then Dup Raj went up to the Maharajah, and said: "Your Majesty, do you wish to see your dream realised, now? I shall have the tree in the middle of the Darbar."

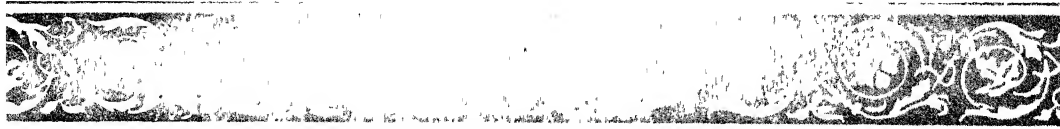
Then he sent a message to his Princesses in the boat, and they came. And, as it had happened before, the Silver Queen began to dance and made a circle, the Gold Queen danced on it and became the trunk of a tree, the Diamond Queen danced and became the branches, the Pearl Queen danced and became the leaves and the *Mamk* Queen danced and became the fruit, and the bird came from Paradise and, when it pecked the fruit, the Queens all came to life again. Then they fell at the feet of Dup Raj, and all called out: "Oh, our dear husband." The Maharajah knew the truth then, and before all his courtiers he said: "I shall give my kingdom to Dup Raj, my youngest son. Take these six elder sons and make them prisoners, with their mother, for whose sake I have been so unkind to my first wife, the mother of Prince Dup Raj." Then he



sent for his first wife, the mother of Prince Dup Raj, who had heard that her son had returned with the dream-tree. When she entered the Darbar, she cried out : "My son, my disowned and forsaken son, have you brought your father's dream to reality? You have done your duty to your father," and she clasped her son in her arms and shed tears of joy.

The Maharajah called out to her : "My dear wife, forgive me for all the cruel treatment you received from me. No, your son is not the disowned one, now. I have disowned the other six and they are prisoners. Your son is the Maharajah. I have given him the kingdom as I had promised."

The mother of Dup Raj then sat on the throne with her husband, and Dup Raj, and his six wives stood around them, and the courtiers said they never saw a finer sight, and they all lived happily ever after.





THE DEAD PRINCE


A great Astrologer had a sister to whom he was devoted. This sister had a little girl. On the sixth day after her birth the sister asked her brother to come and see her new-born baby. The sixth day after birth is the day the Creator comes and writes one's future on the forehead. It was late in the evening when the astrologer came to see his sister. When he entered the lying-in room, his sister said : "You will find something very happy written on her forehead, will you not?" When he was on the point of leaving, the sister said : "*Dada* (elder-brother) you must tell me what is written on my baby's forehead."

The brother took the infant in his arms and by the night-light read the future and did not speak a word. The sister waited, and then began to ask, again and again : "*Dada*, what have you seen? You must tell me."

The astrologer thought he would escape quietly, but his sister sat in the middle of the doorway and prevented his going.

"No, *dada*," she said, "You will not be allowed to go until you tell me what my baby's future is to be."

Then the brother said, in a sad tone : "I am

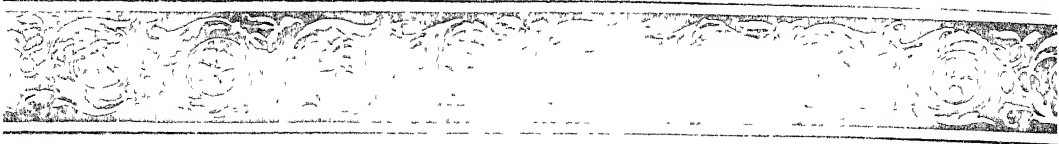


sorry, my sister, that you insist on hearing the future of your baby. She is going to marry a dead man."

The sister screamed and fainted, and the brother quietly left the room. When the girl was about twelve or thirteen years old, her mother's relations and friends pressed her to marry her daughter to a worthy man, but the mother never forgot her brother's prophecy and would not hear anything of marriage; and at last she, with her daughter, left her country one night and nothing was heard of them for a long time

They travelled from village to village and from forest to forest and wandered about, never making a home anywhere, as the thought of the dead husband haunted the mother day and night. She loved her little girl, who was growing up to be a beautiful young woman.


There was a Maharajah who had a little boy, named Dalim Kumar, by his first wife. The second wife had no children and was frantically jealous of Dalim Kumar, knowing he would be the heir to the Raj. The Maharajah loved his son, who was the hope and joy of his life. The boy lived with his mother in a little cottage. Though the Maharajah did not ever ask the first Maharani to enter the palace, his boy, being his heir and only child, often came to him, and the father treated him with kindness. But while he



was still quite young, the boy was found drowned one day, in the lake in the palace grounds. When the father heard of his son's dead body being found in the lake, he wondered for a long time how it could have got there, as the boy seldom came to the palace without asking his father's permission.

When the father wept, the young Maharani was cruel and hard-hearted. Seeing him in such distress, she shouted at him : "How can you mourn and weep for such a boy? You never believed me when I used to tell you that he was jealous of you and was scheming to kill you and be Maharajah himself."

The Maharajah, on hearing this, thought she must be right, otherwise the boy's body would not have been found in the grounds. He must have come there with some wicked motive and most likely slipped into the lake. He gave orders that the boy's dead body should be burnt; and, the dead prince being the heir, it was to be done in state. On hearing this, Dalim Kumar's mother, who was overwhelmed with grief, ran into the palace like a mad woman to the Maharajah and fell at his feet, and, with clasped hands, said : "Be kind, Maharajah, have pity on me. I am a sorrow-stricken mother. I want nothing from you except that you will listen to one prayer and grant it. Oh, be kind to me, kind Maharajah, and let my boy's body be left some-





where, anywhere,—even in some small building ; order them to have his dead body kept there and to put ten years' provision of food and drink with it."

At first the Maharajah would not agree to this, but as the Maharani begged and implored him, the Maharajah ordered a house to be built in the jungle. All Dalim Kumar's musical instruments were put there, and his clothes and his sword, and food for ten years was provided. There was a beautiful lake in the courtyard, and high walls surrounded the house.

When the body was about to be carried to the house, the young Maharani screamed and shouted at the Maharajah and called him a weak man because he had given in to the first Maharani's whim. The Maharajah, though very angry at her words, did not say anything to her, but said to his courtiers : "What I have ordered shall be carried out."

The dead body was taken into the jungle in state, and there lay Dalim Kumar in solitude. Hither, after a couple of years, the astrologer's sister and her daughter came wandering, in the forest.

The girl was very thirsty and asked for a drink crying to her mother : "Mother, I have no more strength to go on. I shall sit under this tree, and I shall die of thirst, I know."

It was summer, and a very hot day, and every-





thing was dry. The mother said : "Come, let us try to find water somewhere."

"No mother, I cannot walk any further. Let me die here, under this tree."

The mother got very much distressed finding her dear child looking so tired. She herself felt helpless in this deserted forest, where only wild animals roamed. Where could she go, to beg for a little food and water? She wanted to weep over her troubles, but she dared not break down as the child was so weak and exhausted and the mother's tears would have alarmed her. The mother hid her feelings, and said to the child, taking her in her arms : "My child, have strength, and do not despair. I am sure there are lakes, ponds, or water of some sort, close by us in this jungle. I am going to fetch you some water, and after a refreshing drink we shall get out of this jungle, and, once we get to a village or the open country, I shall never leave it again, and there you shall live happily, my precious one." Then, kissing her child, she said once more : "Try and have patience, I shall soon be back."

"Oh, mother, mother," cried out the girl, "I am so thirsty : let a tiger or any other wild beast come and put an end to this misery. Dear mother, we cannot possibly go on like this any longer."





The mother left her and went on her search for water, and as she went, she cried out : “Oh, my brother, why did you say that my girl would marry a dead man? I should have been so happy with my child at home, but for this prediction. Now, she will not have to wait to marry a dead man, for she will be dead herself if this goes on much longer.”

She wandered about for a time until at last she came to a lake, and, with joy and great relief, she wetted the end of her *sari*, thus to carry water to her child. But when she got back, where was the child? She was gone. The poor mother wept bitterly and wandered about in the jungle, believing that the child had been killed by a wild beast. As the sun set and darkness fell and she heard the roaring of tigers, she feared that she, too, would be killed; and, with a broken heart, she went out of the jungle and in time returned to her home.

The young girl, when she had been left alone under the tree, thought she also would try to find a pool of water. Dire necessity gave her strength and she ran hither and thither, carrying a few stones in her hand and throwing them before her. At last, as she threw a stone, she thought she heard the sound of its splashing into water. Her face beamed with joy and she exclaimed : “That must be a lake quite near.”





Again she threw a stone, and again heard the same splash of water. Then she ran in the direction of the sound and found a big door. She went through it and found herself in a large garden and saw a beautiful lake with marble steps. She went down the steps and had a drink and the water was cool and crystal-like. The poor girl was so exhausted that she then lay down on a step and fell fast asleep. It was a lovely moonlight night and everything was bright. She was suddenly awakened by the sound of footsteps, and she sprang up. There she stood face to face with a fine young man. They looked at each other, and, for a few moments, neither could speak. Then the young man asked her how she had come to this thick forest and into his house. The girl related the whole story and the prince told her about himself. His house was an ordinary one, but there was a wing of the building, which he showed the girl, and he told her she could stay there as long as she wished. Days passed on. The young couple loved each other more and more every day, and at last, one evening, the youth asked the girl: "Do you wish to go to your mother?"

"I have no place to go to," said the girl. "I do not know where mother is, nor whether she is alive or dead; so, if you will permit me, I should like to stay here."







“Then let us be married,” said the prince. So they got married.

They lived very happily for a few months. One evening, the wife asked her husband: “My dear husband, how is it that you sleep all day long and keep awake at night?”

“Oh, it is a sad, sad story, my dear wife,” said the husband, with a deep sigh.

“May I not hear it now that I am your wife?”

“It is a family secret,” said the husband. “Besides, I know it will make you very unhappy.”

“Oh, my husband, I beg of you to tell me.”

Then the young man began the story, and said: “When I was born, an astrologer came to my father, who is the Maharajah of a big kingdom, and said to him: ‘Maharajah, this son of yours will be a very fine ruler and will be loved by all, if he lives.’ Then, giving him a long and heavy necklace, he said to my father: ‘Take great care of this. It is the life of your son. If anyone puts it round his or her neck the child will be dead.’ My father, on hearing this, put the chain into a gold box and threw it into a deep lake in the palace grounds. My father has a second wife, whom he loves much. She was the only one, besides my own mother, who knew anything about this chain. The second Maharani had no rest until she found the chain in the





lake Without my father's knowledge, she got some fishermen to catch the biggest fish in the lake, which had swallowed the golden box containing the chain. The fishermen were handsomely rewarded for handing over the box to the young Maharani. I was but a boy at the time. As soon as she put the necklace round her neck I was dead, and I feel sure that ever since then she wears the necklace round her neck all day and takes it off at night, and that is the reason I am alive at night and dead in the day-time. It must have been my own mother, who, knowing this, begged my father not to let my body be burned. So here we are, and you have a husband, and I, a lovely wife!"

Then the wife said sweetly to him: "My husband, I promise you I shall get that necklace from the Maharani."

"It is not possible, my dear, it is not possible," said the husband. "Don't try it, let us be happy while we can."

Now, after some time the huntsmen and sportsmen who came to the forest went back and told the Maharajah that Prince Dalim Kumar's house in the forest was haunted.

"Haunted?" exclaimed the Maharajah. "By what?"





“Haunted, Maharajah, by a woman’s voice and a baby’s cry.”

The Maharajah kept silent for a while. “Had my darling Dalim Kumar lived,” he thought, “he would have married, and might have been a father by this time,” and then, speaking aloud, he said : “I did not know that sportsmen and hunters could be such cowards.”

After this, for a long time, nobody said anything about the house. Prince Dalim Kumar’s wife had a baby boy and she was very happy. One day she dressed up as a *naptini* (barber’s wife) and went to the palace. At first the sentry would not let her in. She wore her head-dress very long, in order to conceal herself, and with clasped hands she said to the sentry : “I am very poor, and would feel very grateful if you would recommend me to the Maharani. I have come to paint her feet.”

She spoke in such a gentle voice that the sentry forgot their strict orders and let her in. She went to the inner part of the palace and made friends with the maid-servants, and they told the Maharani that a very good *naptini* had come to paint her feet. The Maharani allowed her to paint her feet with *alta*, and was very much pleased and told the supposed *naptini* that she was to come frequently to do it. This went on for some





time. One day she took her little baby with her, and the Maharani took a great fancy to him, and said : "You must bring him often." She obeyed, and was only too pleased to do so.

Late in the afternoon one day, after the Maharani had played with the boy for a long time, the *naptini* said : "Mother Maharani, will you not let me paint your feet to-day?"

"I am so happy playing with your child, *naptini*," said the Maharani.

"But do let me put *alta* on your feet," said the *naptini*, "It is getting very late."

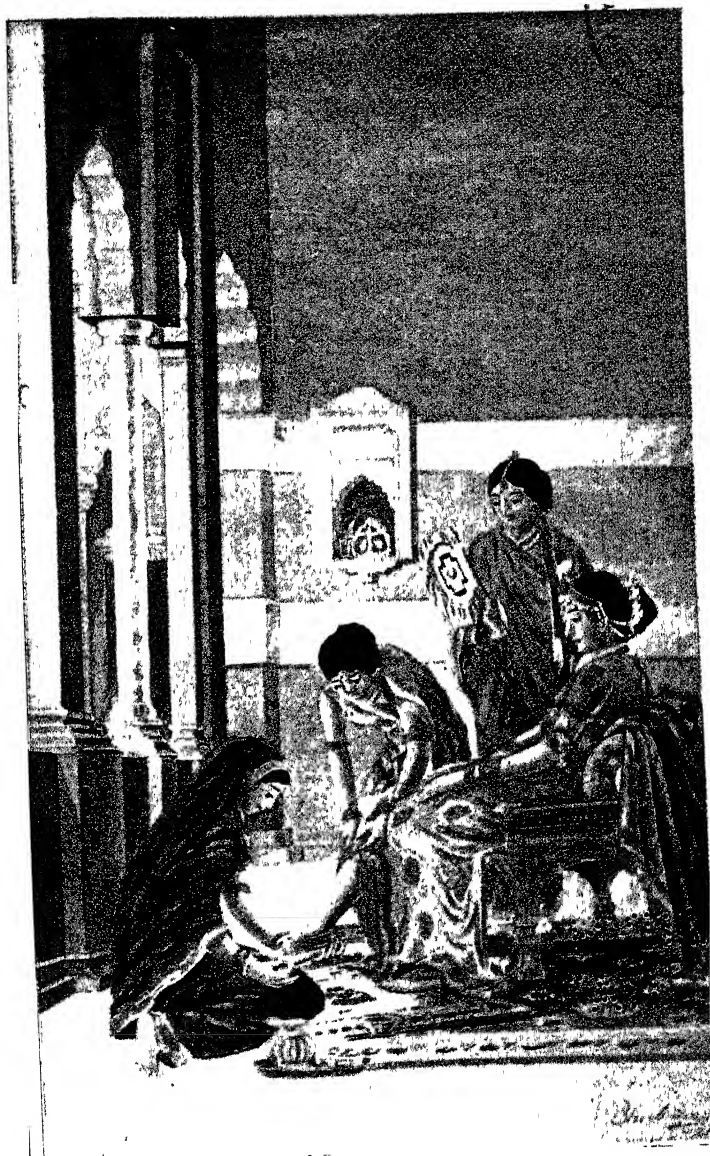
"You have never told me anything about your home-life, *naptini*," remarked the Maharani. "Where is your house?"

"Oh, it is a long, long way from here I have no one in the house except my husband, and he is absolutely useless. You might call him a dead man. I have to do everything myself. He doesn't even get out of his bed, where he lies all day long."

The Maharani said : "Poor *naptini*, why do you not come and live here? I should love to have you near me, and you know I am very, very fond of your little son."

Then she began to give the boy toys and valuable jewels. The disguised *naptini* painted her feet, telling







the Maharani all her woes and weeping. The Maharani looked sad. The *naptimi* was pinching her little son as hard as she could and the little boy yelled in pain. The Maharani asked the *naptimi* what had happened to the little boy, who had just been playing so merrily.

The *naptimi* replied, in a careless way, "Oh, he is a very, very naughty boy." Again the *naptimi* talked of her troubles. Again she pinched the child and he cried, and his crying continued.

The Maharam said: "I cannot let the child cry like this much longer. I must know what is wrong with him."

"Oh, mother Maharani, I feel frightened to tell you what is wrong with the boy," said his mother.

"What is it?" exclaimed the Maharani.

"You will not be angry with my son, will you, mother Maharani?"

"No, certainly not. He is but a baby. What is it?" answered the Maharani.

"It is your necklace, Maharani. You have so spoiled the boy that he dares to cry for the necklace" said the *naptimi*.

And though the Maharani hesitated, she finally took off the necklace and put it round the boy's neck. The *naptimi* became very anxious to finish painting the Maharani's feet, and, as the ladies-in-waiting all came





around, bringing her messages, and showing her the work they had done, the Maharani forgot all about the necklace and the *naptim* slipped quietly away with the baby into the jungle.

From that day, Prince Dalim Kumar never lay in bed all the day. There were sounds of music and singing heard in the forest. At last the news was brought to the Maharaja that, though he had got angry once before on being told of it, sounds of a woman's voice and of a baby's cry most certainly came from Prince Dalim Kumar's house. But now they heard Prince Dalim Kumar's voice also, and the instruments the Prince played on could be heard distinctly. The Maharajah changed his guard there, he sent new officials, and one and all came and told the Maharajah that the smoke of the fire could be seen, and Prince Dalim Kumar's voice was heard.

The Maharajah finally went himself, one day, with a number of his high officials, and stood near the lofty wall which was built round Dalim Kumar's house. When the Maharajah heard a baby's cry and Prince Dalim Kumar's voice within the walls, he ordered the door to be broken open, and then he walked in and found his dear Dalim Kumar standing there with the baby boy in his arms. Dalim Kumar was now, after the years that had elapsed, a young man, strong and





handsome. He fell at his father's feet, over-joyed at seeing him. The Maharajah wept with joy and raised his son up, and then heard the whole story of his getting married to the forsaken girl, and how she had got the necklace from the Maharani.

The Maharajah was amazed to hear that the necklace had been in the young Maharani's possession. He ordered his servants and officials to bring his first Maharani, the mother of Dalim Kumar. When Dalim Kumar's mother was told that her son was alive and that she was to come and see him and his wife and child, she hastened through the streets and the forest, and came running, with the cry : "The necklace has been found and my Dalim Kumar has come to life again. Oh, citizens, Oh, citizens, keep my Dalim Kumar and do not let him go again !"

They all thought she was a mad woman and did not know what she was talking about. When she arrived at Dalim Kumar's house, she bathed him with her tears, and cried out : "My Dalim Kumar, my beloved child, you will never let the necklace go again."

Then Dalim Kumar brought his little wife and child and put them on his mother's lap. The Maharajah came, with clasped hands, and asked the Maharani to forgive him all his cruel treatment towards her. Then he asked what she would like him to do,





and the Maharani begged him to have the necklace thrown into the deepest of oceans. The Maharajah and Dalim Kumar's mother remained in the house, and the Maharajah sent his second wife to a thick forest, full of wild animals, and she was never heard of again. Dalim Kumar was made Maharajah by his father, and ruled his country for ever. For the Dead Prince never died again.

The young queen sent messengers to her birth-place, to ascertain if her mother was still alive and to ask her, if she still lived, to come and stay with her. The poor woman was over-joyed to hear that her girl was still alive, and she could hardly believe it. When she arrived at her son-in-law's State, and had a grand reception. It seemed to her like a dream, and when she entered the palace and saw her pretty daughter with her little son and heir, she wept for joy. The whole story was related to the mother by the daughter, and the mother cried out, with clasped hands: "Oh, Creator, Oh *Dada*, what came from thee was good for my daughter. Little did I know what the dead bridegroom meant. My child has married the dead Dalim Kumar, who will never die again, and I thank thee, *dada*, for thy loving blessings."



